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The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent

ISHTIAQ HUSSAIN QURESHI

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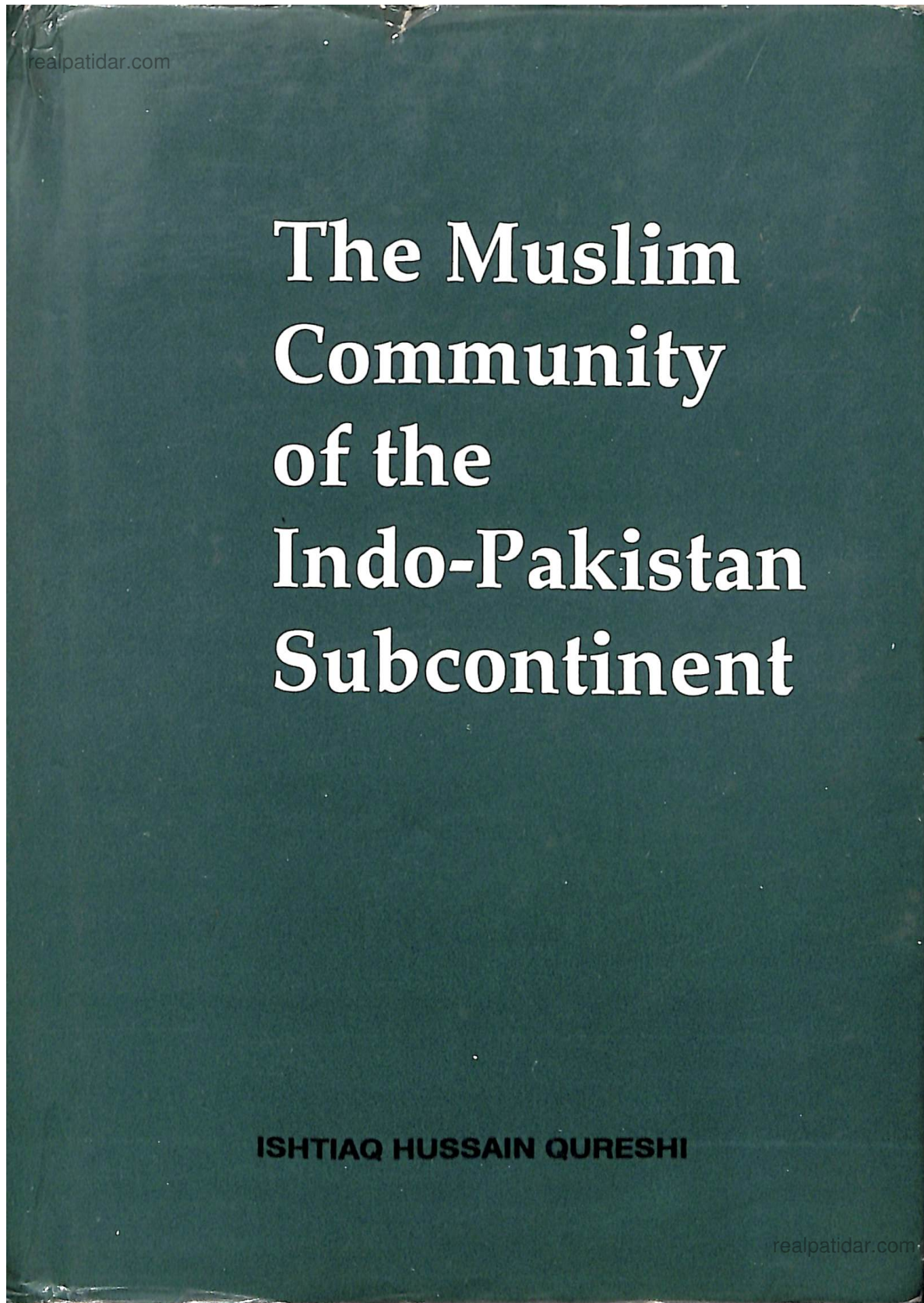
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THE BOOK

The history of the Muslim community of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinental has seldom found its rightful place in historical literature. This is not due to any dearth of material, because the Muslims have been keen recorders of events. Nor does this history lack elements of interest; even as a tale of adventure it is worth telling. The Muslims established and sustained an empire in the subcontinent which lasted for several centuries. When it declined and fell, it left in its wake problems which have yet to find a final solution, one of which persists in the unpredictable relations between India and Pakistan. What little has been written about the Muslims of the subcontinent, deals mostly with the monarchs and their policies. Attracted by their magnificence or impelled by the desire to condemn them, historians have mostly devoted their entire attention to the rulers and none to the people. Thus, there exists an unwarranted ignorance of the psychology of the Indo-Pakistan Muslim community, of the thinking of its leaders and masses, and of the history of its origins, developments and integration. For this it has been necessary to go back to the very beginning and to take into consideration the relevant factors in the entire history of the community. The author exposes, in this study on the subject, its peculiar situation which has moulded its ideas, its destiny, and integrity.

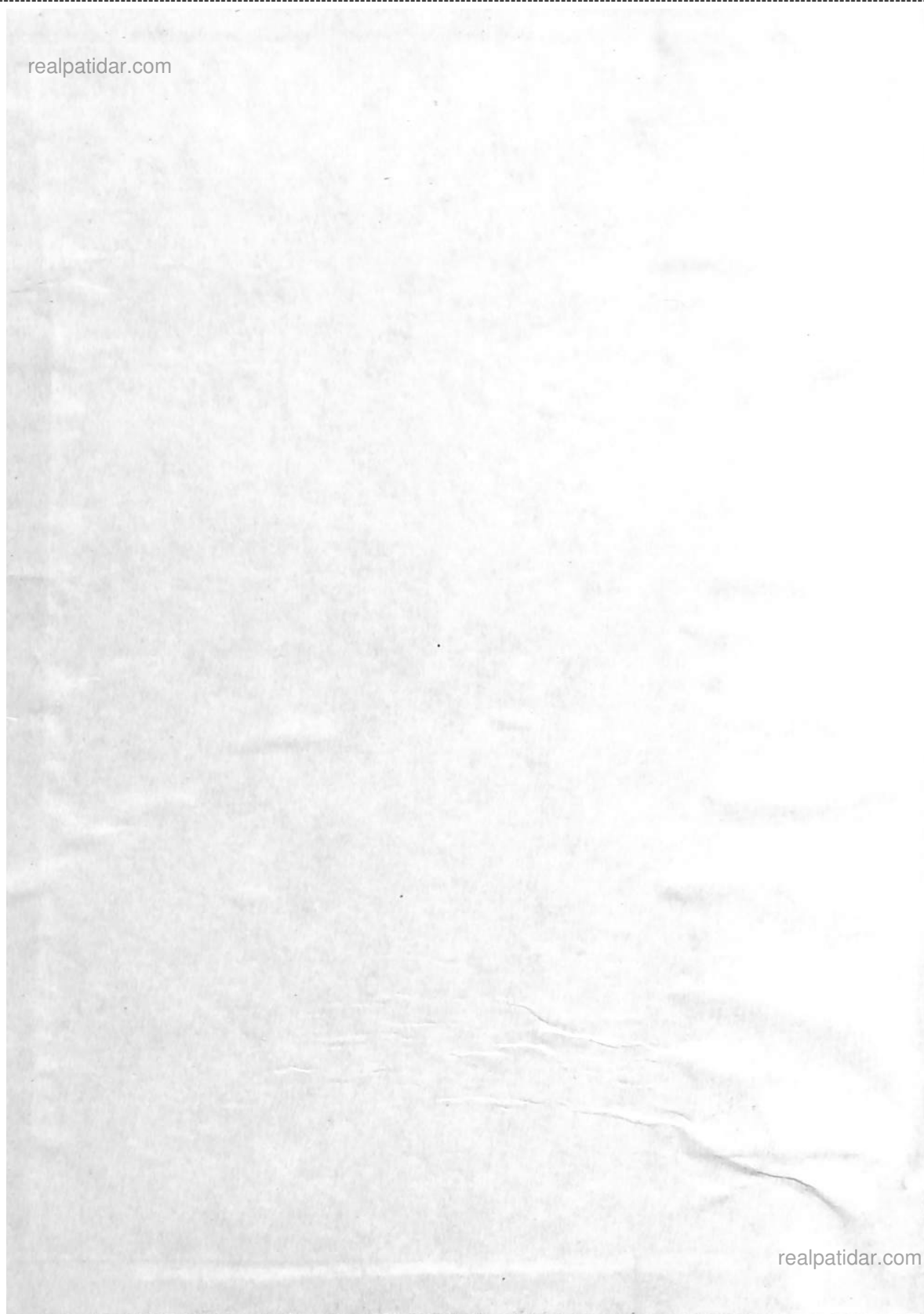
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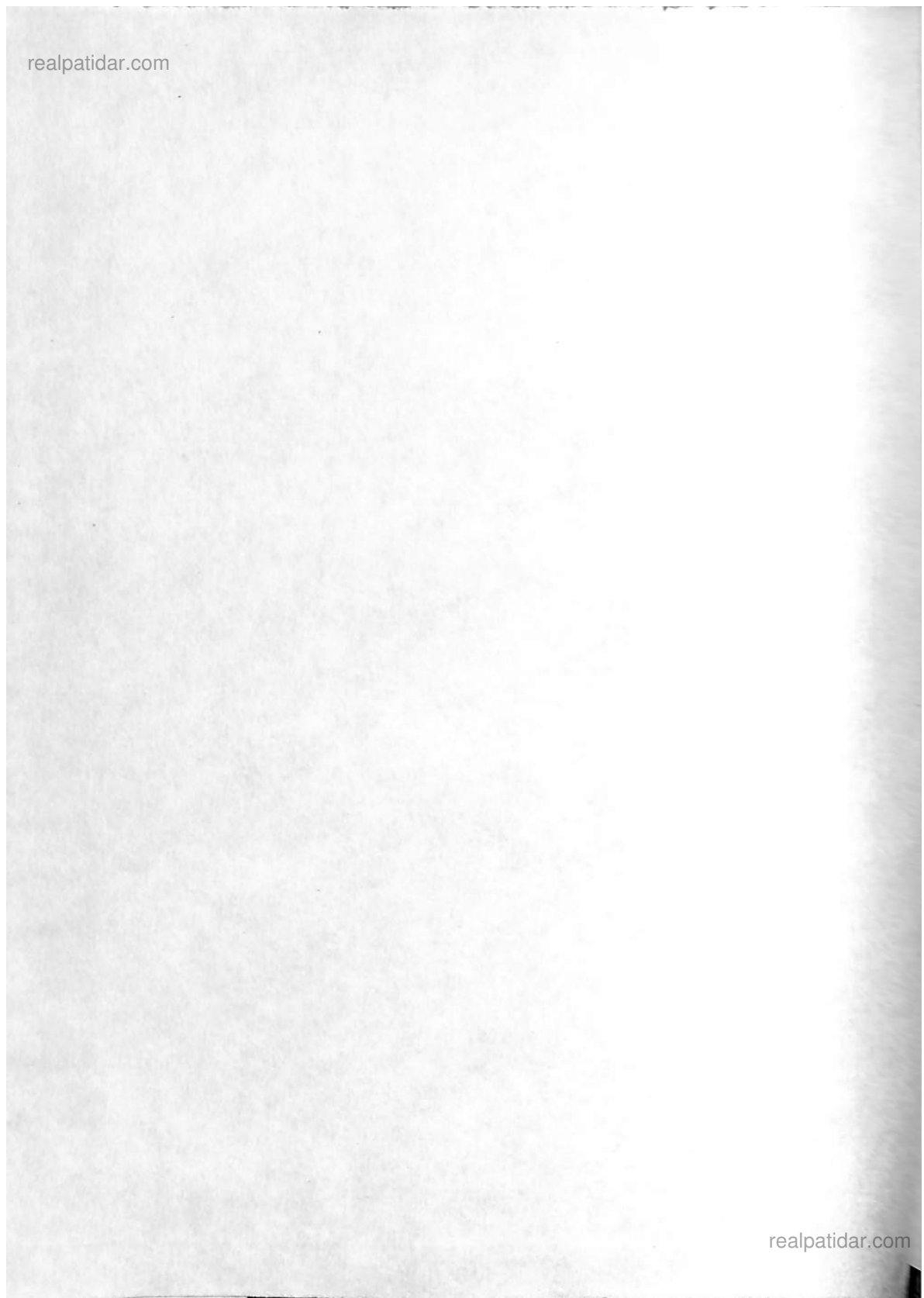
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**THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY
OF THE INDO-PAKISTAN SUBCONTINENT
(610-1947)**

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THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY
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**THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY
OF THE INDO-PAKISTAN
SUBCONTINENT
(610-1947)**

A BRIEF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

by

ISHTIAQ HUSAIN QURESHI



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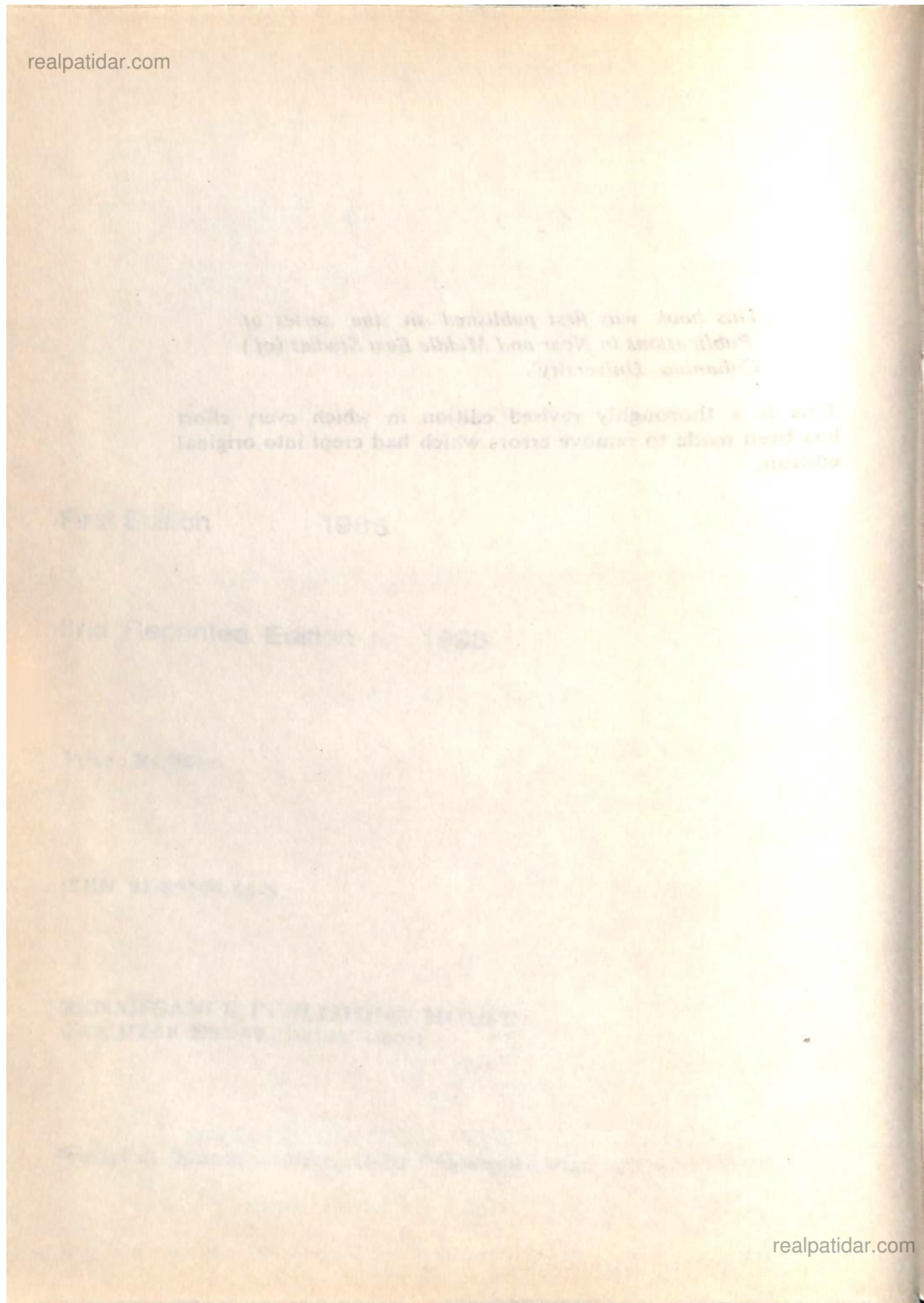
*This book was first published in the series of
'Publications in Near and Middle East Studies (of)
Columbia University'.*

This is a thoroughly revised edition in which every effort
has been made to remove errors which had crept into original
edition.

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PREFACE

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The annals of Muslim India have not found their rightful place in historical literature. This is not due to any dearth of material, because the Muslims have been keen recorders of events. Nor does Indo-Muslim history lack elements of interest; even as a tale of adventure it is worth telling. Many a time a handful of warriors, brilliantly led, have defeated much larger armies and established a reputation of invincibility for Muslim arms. The Muslims established and sustained an empire in the Subcontinent which lasted for several centuries. Its splendour caught the imagination of the world and passed into proverb and song in several languages; in solid achievement, it established traditions of sound administration and culture which were seldom surpassed in that age; when it declined and fell, it left in its wake problems which have yet to find a final solution, one of which persists in the unhappy relations between India and Pakistan.

What little has been written about the Muslims of the Subcontinent deals mostly with the monarchs and their policies. Attracted by their magnificence or impelled by the desire to condemn them, historians have devoted their entire attention to the rulers and none to the people. The source material is not so meagre on economic, social and cultural topics as the students of Indo-Muslim history have been led to believe; there is a good deal of material which awaits intelligent and scientific interpretation. Even more serious is the neglect of the history of the Muslims of the Subcontinent after the loss of their political power. The writings of the historians of British rule create an impression that Islam almost ceased to play a role in the affairs of the Subcontinent after the fall of the Mughul Empire and that, in fact, the Muslims had become a negligible factor, living almost in a state of suspended animation, coming to life only when mischief was afoot or impossible political demands were to be pressed. There is little in English in the way of scientific analysis of the aspirations and fears of such a large community and the historical causes of its existence.

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The Muslim community of the Subcontinent has been treated as if it were only an irrelevant inconvenience, a mere obstruction in the even flow of events, a nuisance which raised its head at awkward moments. There has been little desire to understand the historical background of the emotions which have swayed the community in its great decisions.

When nationalism began to stir the hearts of the inhabitants of the Subcontinent, it was taken for granted that since all of them lived in a common habitat, they would have the same desire for national unity; it was expected of the Muslims that they would dutifully reconcile themselves to the role of a religious minority and would otherwise identify themselves completely with the Indian nation. Such hopes were built upon the most deplorable ignorance of the psychology of the Muslim community, of the thinking of its leaders and masses, and of the history of its origins, development and integration. When history asserted itself and the Muslims claimed to be a nation, many were surprised and not a few even scandalized. If there had been a proper assessment of these factors, and if their study had not been neglected for so long, solutions would have been found more amicably, and India and Pakistan would not have been saddled with such a terrible legacy of bitterness and hostility which cramps their development and vitiates their outlook.

An attempt has been made in these pages to trace the history of the thought-patterns of the community which were formed as the result of its peculiar situation and which have moulded its ideas regarding its destiny and integrity. For this purpose it has been necessary to go back to the very beginning and to take into consideration the relevant factors in the entire history of the community. A study of such a long period, even though restricted in its scope, imposes serious limitations if it is to be presented in a volume of a convenient size; but then, it is useful occasionally to sacrifice the examination of individual trees in order to get a view of the wood. For reasons of space, only a list of the authorities actually cited has been appended

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instead of a detailed bibliography; because of the length of the period and the diversity of the topics which bear upon the theme of the discussion, no other course was found practicable. Documentation has, however, not been sacrificed, because that would have impaired the scientific nature of the work.

Well-known historical events, the details of which can be found in any standard work, have found only brief mention; yet effort has been made to make the narrative intelligible even to those who are not familiar with the history of the Subcontinent. It is hoped that these pages will stimulate interest in the subject and that scholars will come forward with detailed works on topics which in a work like this could be discussed only briefly. A reference to the list of books cited would show that most of the work done hitherto on these problems is in Urdu, which shows that the Muslims of the Subcontinent have been interested in the developments mentioned here. My obligation to these authors has been considerable.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to record my sense of gratitude to the authorities of Columbia University, New York, and of the Rockefeller Foundation, whose generosity and encouragement have made this work possible. I also take this opportunity of thanking the various libraries in Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, which have given me access to their resources. I am particularly obliged to the Pakistan Historical Society, which not only put all its library resources at my disposal but also extended every conceivable co-operation.

Many friends have helped me with valuable suggestions at various stages in the preparation of the manuscript. It would be invidious to mention only a few of them; the full list would become too lengthy. I am under a deep obligation to all of them.

I must add that the views expressed in this book are entirely mine and that I take the sole responsibility for them.

ISHTIAQ H. QURESHI

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NOTE ON THE SECOND EDITION

This book was first published in the series of Publications in Near and Middle East Studies (of) Columbia University (New York, U.S.A.). The entire edition and a subsequent reprint were sold out several years ago and the book has been out of print all this time. Yet the demand has persisted. Hence it has become necessary to publish this edition.

Quite a few alterations and corrections have been incorporated, which will reveal themselves on scrutiny. Generally speaking, however, changes have been made only where they have been absolutely necessary.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the Publishers—Ma'aref, Ltd. and Ma'aref Printers—especially Wing Commander A. Quddus, for their patience and co-operation.

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18 April, 1977.

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NOTE ON transliteration

The following system has been used:

ph	फ़	q	ق	r	ر - ر	a	ا
th	ث - تھ	k	ک	z	ز	b	ب
jh	جھ	l	ل	s	س	p	پ
chh	چھ	m	م	sh	ش	t	ت - ٹ
dh	ڈ - دھ	n	ن	ṣ	ص	th	ٹ
kh	کھ	w	و	ḍ	ض	j	ج
gh	گھ	h	ہ	ṭ	ط	ch	چ
		'	ء	ẓ	ظ	ḥ	ح
		i	ی	'	ع	kh	خ
		e	ے	gh	غ	d	د - ڈ
		bh	بھ	f	ف	dh	ذ

The nearest Persian equivalent sign has been taken to stand for the Sanskrit sounds to keep the transliteration within certain limits, except for the palatal soft liquid n which has been transliterated as ñ. Sanskrit sounds ś (श) and ṣ (ष) have been uniformly transliterated as sh (which represents their approximate pronunciation). Thus, āshrama for āśrama and mokṣha, for moṣa. The Sanskrit r vowel is regularly transliterated by ri.

The short vowels have been transliterated as a, u and i; the long vowels as ā, ī and ī.

Words which have found their way into the English dictionary have not been transliterated.

Names of places have been spelt in the manner in which they are familiar to the students of the history and geography of the Subcontinent. Unfamiliar names have been transliterated.

Uniformity has not been observed in the transliteration of the names of persons; the names of those who wrote in English have been spelt as they themselves spelt them, e.g. for Saiyid Aḥmad Khān, Syed Ahmed Khan, for Muḥammad 'Alī, Mohamed Ali, etc.

NOTE ON REFERENCES

To save space, the references mention only the name of the author. The names of books are given only when more than one work by the same author is cited. All authors referred to in the footnotes have been included in the appended list of the authorities, which contains the necessary details.



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I

Islam enters the Subcontinent

Trade relations between the Arabs and India existed before recorded history.¹ The Arabs already had settlements on the Indian coast, sometimes in partnership with Iran, when Arabia was converted. Islam, therefore, entered the Subcontinent within a few years of the proclamation by the Prophet of his mission. The conversion of the Arabs to Islam, in all probability, changed the Arab settlements into centres of dissemination of information about Islam. The conversion of the Arab trader could not have gone unnoticed because Islam brought about such a remarkable change in his attitudes and way of life. The trader himself, being so full of enthusiasm for his new faith, would seek every opportunity to speak about it.² This was a period of religious controversy in the South. Brahminism was waging a war upon Buddhism and Jainism; these two religions had been worsted in the North and were now on the defensive in the South. Polemics and controversy were the order of the day; Brahminism backed argument with political pressure and persecution and even

¹ For a history of Arab seafaring, see Hourani; commerce with India finds mention at several places, specially on pp. 32, 33; Nainar; Nadwi, Saiyid Sulaimān, *‘Arabon ki jahāzrānī*.

² For the history of the preaching of Islam, see Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*. For the part played by Muslim traders, see *ibid.*, pp. 409, 419.

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with massacres of the followers of the politically helpless faiths; hence religion must have been uppermost in the minds of the populace.³ In such circumstances, new religious ideas have great opportunities. In the beginning Islam had one obvious advantage over Buddhism and Jainism: it was politically so insignificant in India that it posed no serious danger to the ascendancy of Brahminism. In course of time the Arabs had come to possess a monopoly of the carrying trade in several ports and had the lion's share of the foreign trade in others.⁴ Actually, at that time they had no serious competitors. Seafaring does not seem to have been popular with many sections of the South Indians, because they did not like to go to other countries, being afraid of not being able to observe the caste taboos regarding food and touchability,⁵ and yet foreign trade was a lucrative source of income to the various states where the Arabs had their settlements. They were, therefore, well protected and received every consideration at the hands of the rulers as well as the populace to whose prosperity they contributed.⁶ Thus the wave of religious persecution and intolerance left them unaffected.

The Arab settlements seem to have grown in importance after the conversion of the Arabs to Islam, because we continue to hear of new establishments throughout the first three centuries of the Hijrah era.⁷ This cannot be entirely due to the improvement in the knowledge of the Arab geographers,

³ The conflict among Brahminism and Buddhism and Jainism is the subject of several legends. A characteristic legend is about Triṣṇāna Sam-bandhar who succeeded in converting the Jain king, Kun Pāndya, after defeating a large party of Jain divines in debate. As these divines refused to be converted along with the king, they were all executed. Kun Pāndya was the king of Madurā (Chand, p. 88; also Kingsbury, pp. 10, 11). Another instance is given by Barth, p. 208.

⁴ Reinaud, I, p. xxxix.

⁵ It is difficult to say when these Hindus began to look upon seafaring with disfavour, but this certainly happened before the advent of Islam in South India. The *zamorin* encouraged the Arabs to convert some Hindu children to Islam, so that it should be easier to find men to man the ships (Innes, p. 190). The revival of the maritime power of the Cholas in the 10th century and the existence of Pallava influence in Indonesia show that all Hindus were not averse to seafaring.

⁶ Throughout this period the evidence of the travellers is unanimous; e.g., Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, IV, pp. 56 *et. seq.*

⁷ Nadūi, Saiyid Sulaimān, 'Arab wa Hind ke ta alluqat, pp. 54, 55.



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though this improvement is in itself an indication of the increased activity of the Arab seafarers. The quickening of the constructive spirit among the Arabs after their conversion to Islam expressed itself in so many directions that the expansion of their trade was a natural sequel. The Arab conquests in Western Asia and North Africa made the Arabs heirs to many a trading community and now their commercial activities extended from the shores of the Southern Mediterranean to the coast of China.⁸ Arabia was a desert land denuded of good timber, hence the Arabs took advantage of the dense Indian forests and expanded the shipbuilding industry of the Indian coast. The trade with the spice-rich islands of South-East Asia and the silk manufacturing centres of China made it necessary for the Arabs to have well-equipped settlements on the Indian coast. The Arab name of the Coromandel coast of South India is significant; they called it the "Ma'bar", which, in Arabic, means a "crossing".⁹ It was here that the trade routes to the fertile coasts of Bengal and Burma, the fabulous islands of the South-East Asian archipelagos and the lands of Indo-China and China on the one side, and the West coast of India, Sind, the Persian Gulf, Arabia and Africa on the other, converged. The importance of the Indian settlements was obvious in the pattern of Arab commerce.

This mutual advantage to the Indians and the Arabs led to the growth of friendly relations between the local authorities and the Arab settlements. India seemed too vast to excite the cupidity of the Arabs for the establishment of political supremacy; the Arab resources were inadequate for such ambitions. The Arabs were not great naval fighters and their commerce was essentially peaceful. The risks involved in any endeavour to make themselves politically dominant were too great and the importance of the Indian trade so overwhelming that there was no room for any political adventures; besides, the attitude of the native rulers was so friendly that they seldom offered justification for any offensive action. Hence the Arab relations

⁸ By 758 Arabs and Persians were strong enough to sack and burn Kwangchou (Canton) and to go away by sea (Hourani, p. 63).

⁹ E.g., Abu-'l-Fidā, *Geographie d' Aboulfeda*, uses Ma'bar; this was the name known to the people of Delhi, e.g., Baranī, pp. 333, 334; also Abu-'l-Fidā, *Taqwim-u'l-buldān*, p. 355.



with the peoples and rulers of South India were mostly peaceful and friendly.¹⁰

With their conversion from paganism to Islam, the Arabs must have demanded the authority to organize their civil and religious life in accordance with their own code and under their own control. It is not improbable that the pagan Arabs had such autonomy and they also had their own temples for the worship of their deities;¹¹ but after their conversion both autonomy and mosques must have seemed an absolute necessity to them because congregational prayers are a fundamental need of Islamic life and the Muslims have a code of laws based upon religion which they cannot abjure in favour of other laws. The Muslims had the right of public worship in most of the settlements and also managed their religious affairs.¹² They also had the right to apply their own law to their personal and civil affairs. The Muslims thus had no grievance against the authorities of the Indian states in which they carried on their business. They were respected and, though they do not seem to have meddled in local politics, yet there were occasions when they were called upon to accept high offices or were entrusted with important duties.¹³ This shows the extent to which cooperation existed between the Muslim traders and the local authorities.

¹⁰ The first recorded armed venture by Muslim Arabs against the Indian coast took place in 636, when the governor of Bahhrain and 'Ummān sent an armed expedition to Thāna. Expeditions were also sent against Broach and Dābul, but the caliph, 'Umar, forbade further naval expeditions (Elliot and Dowson, I, pp. 115, 116). There was another expedition in the eighth century. There is another legend that a Muslim missionary, Saiyid Ibrāhīm Shāhid, defeated the Pāndya king and ruled over his kingdom for twelve years before he was overthrown and slain in 1217 (Khan, Qadir Husayn, pp. 36-38).

¹¹ It is significant that the head of the settlement was called *hunarman*, a corruption of the Persian *hunarmand*; this shows that the office goes back to the days when the settlements were in the hands of the Persians. He performed the duties of the *qādi*; this shows that the pre-Muslim Arabs and Persians had religious autonomy (Buzurg bin Shāhryār, 'Ajā'b-u'l-Hind, p. 144). The English version has *hebermen*, which obviously is a misreading of *hunarman*, هنر من (The Book of the Marvels of India, p. 120).

¹² Buzurg bin Shāhryār, p. 120; the ruler did not punish a Muslim sailor accused of sacrilege without consulting the *hunarman*.

¹³ E.g., Sundara, the Pāndya king, had Taqī-u'd-dīn as his adviser and deputy minister, who was succeeded in the same office by his son and grandson. Another Muslim, Fakhr-u'd-dīn, was the Pāndya ambassador to Kublāi Khān (Yule, II, p. 314).



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As the result of these facilities and sometimes because of changes in the political situation in the countries of their origin, the Muslim population increased in the settlements.¹⁴ In some of these it rose to be as high as almost twenty per cent of the total population.¹⁵ These high figures, however, do not represent the foreign element alone. Many of the Arab settlers married local women and their progeny was treated like the foreign traders themselves.¹⁶ Besides, the Arabs were encouraged to convert some of the native children every year and bring them up as Muslims so that they might be trained as seamen, because, as has been mentioned before, the Hindus were reluctant to leave their shores.¹⁷ The Arabs generally married high-caste Nāir women, which is a significant indication of the social status of the Muslim traders in the contemporary society of South India; this was the beginning of the well-known Muslim community of Malabar, called the Moplahs. The name comes from *mappilla*, which means "a great child" or "a bridegroom"; the latter is more appropriate because of the privilege which was originally extended to them of marrying Nāir women. A Muslim was permitted to be seated by the side of a Nambutiri Brahmin, a privilege denied even to a Nāir. Their imam, known as *thangal*, was permitted to ride in a palanquin alongside of the ruler, the *zamorin*.¹⁸

Although a community in such a privileged position and fired with an enthusiasm for its faith could not but have taken advantage of the situation, there is very little record of early Muslim missionary effort in South India. There is, however, the remarkable legend of the conversion of the last Cherāman Perūmal king of Malabar.¹⁹ He is reported to have seen a vision which he narrated to a party of Muslims who were on

¹⁴ The Labbes, a Muslim community of Mysore, have a tradition that they are the descendants of Hashimites, who left their homes because of the persecution of Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf (Thurston, IV p. 199).

¹⁵ Innes, p. 190.

¹⁶ E.g., the Muslim chiefs of Cannanore were the hereditary admirals of the Kolattiri rajas; they were the descendants either of an Arab or of a Nāir converted to Islam, according to different traditions (Innes, p. 44).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁸ Chand, p. 35; Thurston, pp. 459 ff.

¹⁹ Zain-u'd-din, pp. 23, 24. The rulers of Malabar were called *Sāmari* by the Arabs; *Sāmari* is the origin of *zamorin*.



their way back from Ceylon. It was satisfactorily interpreted and the ruler was converted to Islam. He was given the name of 'Abd-u'r-Raḥmān. The king saw the difficulty of ruling a Hindu land after having been converted to Islam and migrated to Arabia, where he died. He sent trusted envoys to his kingdom advising his successors about the government of his dominions and asking for religious and civil facilities for Muslims. His wishes were respected by the subsequent rulers of his dynasty. Certain traditions in Malabar show that there is considerable truth in the legend. When a new *zamorin* is enthroned, he is dressed like a Muslim and crowned by a Moplah. After his coronation, the *zamorin* is treated as an outcaste. The *zamorin* is supposed to rule only as a viceroy awaiting the return of 'Abd-u'r-Raḥmān from Arabia.²⁰ The Maharaja of Travancore, the successor of the *zamorins*, still declares on receiving the sword of authority, at the time of his succession, that he "will keep the sword until the uncle who has gone to Mecca returns".²¹ There are certain doubtful elements in the legend, which seems to have been elaborated in the course of the centuries, but the continuity of the tradition in the ceremonial at the time of the coronation confirms the essential truth of a *zamorin* having been converted to Islam and having migrated to Arabia.

Very little is known about the early missionaries of Islam in South India. The reason is that before the organization of the different *silsilahs* of the Sufis, who had some tradition of recording the lives of their more eminent members, missionary work was carried on by traders and men in other walks of life, whose main activity was not the propagation of their faith. Even the Sufi records are unsatisfactory as histories of missionary effort, because this was but a part of their religious activities. One of the earliest figures about whom we know something is Naṭhar Walī, who died in 1225 and lies buried at Trichinopoly. He belonged to a noble family of Asia Minor, but he dedicated his life to religion and was directed by his preceptor, Saiyid 'Alī Pādshāh of Hormuz, to go to South India and propagate Islam there. The Ravuttans of Madurā

²⁰ Logan, I, p. 231; Chand, p. 34.

²¹ *Ibid.*



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and Trichinopoly have a tradition that they were converted to Islam by him.²² His successor was Saiyid Ibrāhīm Shāhid, who came into conflict with the Pāndya king in 1205. He was martyred in 1217 and lies buried at Ervadi. The causes of his coming into conflict with the Pāndya ruler are obscure, but it seems that he was obstructed in his missionary effort.²³ Another disciple of Naṭhar Walī was Bābā Fakhr-u'd-dīn, who belonged to both the Qādirī and Suhrawardī *silsilahs* of Sufis. He is said to have been successful in converting the ruler of Pennukonda. The Dūdekulas claim that they were converted by him. He died in 1294 and lies buried in Pennukonda.²⁴ His tomb was built by Tīpū Sulṭān, who endowed it with extensive lands. Similarly we read of 'Alīyār Shāh, who went to Madura in the 11th century, and whose tomb is respected by the local population.²⁵ There is but scanty information readily available to the scholar; but it seems to establish a pattern. In the beginning the propagation of Islam was carried on by the Arab settlements, but gradually, with the rise of the various orders (*silsilahs*), the Sufis started coming to South India and established themselves for the dual purpose of maintaining the religious fervour of the Muslims and converting the non-Muslims. They seem to have succeeded more in gaining the respect of the local population than in winning outright converts.

The importance of the Muslim settlements in the propagation of Islam should not be underestimated. Every settlement had at least a mosque, and generally a well-trained scholar was attached to it as imam.²⁶ Though Islam does not require any priesthood to lead the services and administer other rites,

²² He has been variously mentioned as Nādir Shāh (*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, XXIV, p. 47), Nathad Vali (Khan, Qadir Husayn, p. 36) and Nather Shāh (Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 267). The first is wrong, the second only a local variant because the South Indian liquid *d* is pronounced like a hard *r* and is used for the Arabic soft *r* and Vali, really Walī, is used as an appellation for saints like the more common *shāh* in the Subcontinent.

²³ Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, p. 267.

²⁴ Khan, Qadir Husayn, pp. 33—42.

²⁵ Nelson, III, p. 70.

²⁶ Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, IV, pp. 56 ff. in his itinerary of the Indian coast mentions Muslim *qādis* and other religious dignitaries resident in the settlements.



yet, for the sake of convenience, it has been customary to have a small staff attached to every mosque so that it may be kept in good order and the needs of the worshippers may be catered to; the head of this staff is the imam, whose main function is to lead the congregations in prayers at the appointed times. He is also generally consulted by the people living in the vicinity on points of theology and even the Islamic law. The autonomous settlements of the Muslim traders maintained their own *qādis*, or judges, who settled any cases involving their personal or civil law.²⁷ The more prosperous settlements had also their *muftis*, who could pronounce authoritative opinions on legal and theological matters.²⁸ These men were often scholars of deep learning and great piety. They played an important role in the religious life of the community and some of them would also be endowed with missionary zeal.

All these efforts, however, do not seem to have achieved the spectacular results which the missionaries of Islam achieved later in other areas. The scattered Muslim communities of South India are small in number and they have lost the influence they once commanded as the result of their preeminence in sea-borne commerce. The Muslim population in South India received considerable accretions later with the establishment of Muslim rule, because a large number of Muslims migrated from Iran and other Muslim countries including North India; this tendency came to an end only with the absorption of the Nizam's dominions into the Indian Union.²⁹ It is true that there are pockets of Muslim population in South India, but the success that was achieved by Islam in Bengal, Kashmir or Sind, where gradually the major portion of the population was converted to Islam, did not reward Muslim efforts in South India. The sufi efforts continued in the Deccan under the Muslim rulers as well. One comes across several names and legends connected with them, but sometimes it is difficult

²⁷ Ibn Battūṭah, IV, pp. 56 ff.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ The Nizam employed Arabs in his personal troops; the commander-in-chief of Hyderabad troops engaged against the Indian forces in September 1948 was Edroos, an Arab. Many persons from North India found employment in the state, creating a rivalry between the locals and outsiders.



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even to be certain whether a saint had come before the establishment of Muslim rule or had followed it. Sultān Muḥammad bin Tughluq transferred a number of divines and Sufis to Daulatabad; with this fact is probably connected the legend of several hundred saints having gone to the Deccan in palanquins, though the dates given vary greatly.³⁰ A mass exodus to the Deccan in palanquins is more likely to have been the result of state action rather than the effort of Shaiḥ Nizām-u'd-dīn of Delhi and his followers. The Sufis of this *silsilah* believed in extreme austerity and it seems improbable that they would travel all that distance in palanquins. One reads about many Sufis attached to the various *silsilahs* and also others not attached to any organization going to the South both before the establishment of Muslim rule and after. The most important of these was Saiyid Muḥammad al-Ḥusainī, generally called Bandah-nawāz Gisu-darāz, whose tomb at Gulbarga is the most highly respected shrine in that area.³¹ He was born in Delhi in 1321 and died in Gulbarga in 1422. The efforts of all these Sufis no doubt contributed to the increase in the Muslim population of South India and there are several traditions in various communities regarding their conversion by some of them. But these efforts did not result in any spectacular increase in the Muslim population. It continued to be a small minority.

The beneficial results of the propagation of Islam in South India have been recognized by some non-Muslim writers;³² and it could be expected that Islam, being free from disabilities imposed by the caste system, which are extremely rigid in South India, would gain a larger number of adherents from the "untouchable" sections of the Hindu population, but this has not happened. The identification of some of the Muslims with the higher strata of society may have been a contributing factor in limiting the progress of Islam. One factor militating against the spread of any new religion among the Hindus has always been the fear of losing intimate contacts with the family, which, under the dictates of the caste rules, must

³⁰ Ikrām, *Āb-i-Kawthar*, pp. 412-414.

³¹ 'Abd-u'r-Raḥmān, pp. 483—520.

³² Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, pp. 290, 291.



break off social relations with the convert, who becomes an outcaste. This was a price which many people were not willing to pay.³³ Absorption into the social system of Islam meant an entirely new life and human nature shrinks from making such a complete break from all old associations; this is specially true of the Hindus, whose family ties are so strong. The system of extended and joint families in Hinduism is only one manifestation of the strength of family ties in Hinduism.

Even when all the difficulties are taken into consideration, there can be little doubt that the Muslims failed to accept the challenge which the situation in South India offered. The egalitarian and democratic teachings of Islam should have aroused greater and more organized effort at the sight of the gross inequalities inherent in the system of untouchability. The opportunities were great in the beginning, because then Islam did not incur the hostility of the native authorities. It came into contact with South India at an earlier date than it did with either Bengal or Kashmir, where it made such rapid conquests. The progress of Islam has been erratic because it has never been organized. This lack of organization and forethought one discovers in all Muslim missionary effort; Islam has often lost domains which it could have easily won if there had been planning and organization. The freedom arising out of the absence of a priesthood organized into a church is a source of strength to Islam; it is for this reason that Muslim missionaries have come from the ranks of ordinary men who have pursued missionary work as a subsidiary activity; but the absence of a church has led to the lack of a planned missionary policy. Even the Sufis were not primarily concerned with the conversion of the non-Muslims; it is true that missionary effort was an important sphere of activities for some of the *silsilahs*; but there were others where all emphasis was laid upon their own spiritual discipline or on creating religious fervour among Muslims. Even when missionary work did form an important feature of their activities, there does not seem to have been a concentrated effort in the direction of converting solid blocks of territories where the soil promised to be fertile. Thus South India remained essentially a

³³ Husaini, pp. 118, 119.



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non-Muslim land. No Sufi tract shows any consciousness of the possibilities of conversion existing among the untouchables of India.

Though Islam was not successful in winning the majority of the population to Islam in South India, yet it won remarkable victories in a different, unexpected and important sphere. Its impact upon the religious thought of the area was deep and profound. Writers on the history of religious thought in India are struck by certain developments after the seventh century; the question arises: what was the cause of these developments? This needs a brief account of the main elements of Hindu religious thought before the advent of Islam in the Subcontinent. Because of the diversity and complexity found in Hindu thought, it is necessary to restrict the discussion to a few broad features which may be considered to be characteristic.

The underlying theme is *moksha* or emancipation from suffering. The soul is bound by the consequences of its actions; to gain freedom it must purify itself of the effects which its evil actions bring in their wake. As it is impossible for the soul to rid itself of these effects in a single life without serious effort, it has to come again and again into the world to work out the consequences of its actions. This is the law of *karman*; its fundamental corollary is belief in metempsychosis, without which the soul would not have sufficient time in a physical environment, in which alone the effects of actions in the past life can manifest themselves. Thus *moksha* in its practical aspect is emancipation from this cycle of birth and rebirth; by attaining this freedom the soul may attain a state of eternal bliss. There are different conceptions of this state of bliss and of the methods of attaining it, but throughout Hindu thought and belief, the law of *karman* occupies a basic position. There are three main approaches to the problem of attaining *moksha*; these are called *mārgas* or paths. The first is *karma-mārga* or the path of action; the second is *jñāna-mārga*, or the path of knowledge; the third is *bhakti-mārga*, or the path of devotion. They are not mutually exclusive; it is mainly a question of emphasis.³⁴ Scholars are inclined to believe that the path of action embodies the Aryan tradition of ritualism and activity;

³⁴ Radhakrishnan, pp. 48, 52—76.



the path of knowledge represents the subsequent mellowing of thought under the influence of the more civilized and thoughtful elements absorbed from the Dravidian traditions and population; while the path of devotion originally was purely a popular and Dravidian tradition. Here again, it is not possible to draw the lines in a positive and definite manner, but even then the broad tendencies can be identified as Aryan or Dravidian in their origin. There are so many shades of thought and such uninhibited speculation that any attempt at classification can at best be arbitrary and imperfect; yet this is the simplest way of defining the main tendencies. The three paths, it would emerge from this discussion, came into prominence in the order in which they are listed above.

In its highest philosophic form the Vedic belief is that before the creation both being and not-being were non-existent; in this dark void breathed the One, "calm and windless", when desire sprang in Him, and thus creation began.³⁵ The popular and less abstract forms of this philosophy were more symbolic and picturesque. From the basic idea of the universe having been the creation of a Supreme Being, there emerged the belief that the universe was governed by the will of God, which expresses itself as the eternal order of the universe and which embodies a chain of law. Natural phenomena and the gods are alike subject to this law.³⁶ The gods of Vedic conception are the personifications of the forces of nature.³⁷ Worship is the performance of rites and sacrifice. Sacrifice is the essential principle of the universe and, therefore, it is the means of attaining prosperity in this world as well as a state of blessedness after death. Sacrifice was interpreted in its literal sense; it meant oblations of animals and other articles of food.³⁸ Sacrifice is important, but it is not the sum total of human action, and it is human action which results in the freedom or bondage of the human soul, hence it is necessary to map out man's entire life. This was done by fixing his place in society and then assigning to him the duties appropriate to his station. This was the classification of man into the four *varnas*; within

³⁵ *Rig Veda*, 10.129.1,2; Basham, p. 247.

³⁶ Bergaigne, chapter III.

³⁷ Cowell, p. 52; Masson-Oursel, p. 125.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 125; also Oltramare, I, chapter II.



these *varnas* there were stations or stages in the life of the individual, known as *āśhramas*.³⁹ The combination came to be known as *varnāśhramadharma*, or the religion of caste and station in life. This also provides the basic concept of the path of action.

It may be explained here that the word *varna* really means colour, and therefore the basic division of society was on the basis of colour. This is an excellent example of religious ideas being conditioned by the social concepts prevailing in an age. The race and colour conscious light-complexioned Aryan was anxious to preserve his racial identity and did not want to mingle his blood with the older population of a darker complexion whom he had defeated and subdued. The philosophy of the *varnāśhramadharma* was an excellent device for this purpose and history has witnessed its success.

The Vedas themselves contain various strata of historical development of thought, but subsequently the Vedic conceptions were considerably modified in popular belief. It has been mentioned that the Vedas contain the conception of several gods subject to the law embodying the will of a supreme being. It is generally believed by competent scholars that the concept of these deities preceded the idea of a Supreme Being. At the popular level the gods of the Vedic pantheon must have received the greater attention; as the idea of the Supreme Being was more philosophic, it would not appeal to the populace to the extent of diverting their mind from the subordinate deities. The Dravidian deities had never been completely eliminated from the religious scene; there are some who believe that one of the gods worshipped in Moenjodaro was either *Shiva* himself or his prototype.⁴⁰ Later we find that *Shiva* and *Vishnū* emerge as the more popular gods and in course of time they came to form the well-known Hindu trinity of *Brahmā*, *Shiva* and *Vishnū*. If *Shiva* represented an ancient Dravidian deity, it is not surprising that he gradually came to possess the uppermost place in the popular mind. As the result of the rise of *Shiva* and *Vishnū* in popular esteem, the *Shaivite* and *Vaishnavite* cults assumed the dominant positions

³⁹ Basham, pp. 158, 159, 246.

⁴⁰ *Pakistan Miscellany*, p. 25; *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, pp. 20, 21.



among the Hindu sects; of the two the Shaivites were the more numerous. There were also the worshippers of other gods and deities, but Hinduism was divided into too many sects to find a mention in this brief survey. The followers of the path of action were to be found in most of these sects.

The more speculative minds were not satisfied with the philosophy on which the path of action was based. They wanted to understand the principles lying behind action and its consequences. This led to an emphasis upon knowledge, because only by knowing could the human soul escape the otherwise unbreakable shackles of the chain of actions and their consequences.⁴¹ The endeavours of these thinkers have given to humanity some of the highest flights of speculative philosophy in the world. Absolutely uninhibited in their thinking, the philosophers have produced diverse explanations of the cosmos and have suggested different ways of *moksha*, and it is by no means easy to give a concise account of their thought. A process of thought which has produced independent and historical faiths like Buddhism and Jainism, and which embraces within its fold schools of thought like the Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Vedānta and Tāntra, defies efforts at simplification. The Upanishad literature also owes its existence to the thinkers of the path of knowledge. One assumption is common to all these schools of thought; it is the law of *karman* with its concomitants of metempsychosis and the idea of *moksha*. Their ideas of cosmology, soul, matter, God and creation differ widely. The metaphysical postulates are also different. Pluralism in various degrees, dualism in several forms, and monism, all are represented; many conceptions of the godhead exist along with atheism as well as agnosticism; one comes across such an exuberant growth of ideas that one despairs of bringing them together into a systematic classification; they seem to jostle one another and form themselves into all kinds of permutations. At the popular level this diversity sometimes produced sects which were sunk in rank superstition and animism of a primitive type. Hinduism has always been a mansion of many stories and diverse apartments; it has nurtured within its bosom

⁴¹ A standard authority on Hindu philosophy is Müller; a shorter account is contained in *Columbia Encyclopedia*, article on Vedānta.



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philosophy and superstition alike; it is capable of tolerating, even upholding, contradictory beliefs within its fold.

It is, however, necessary to describe one or two schools a little more fully because of their impact upon Islam or that of Islam upon them. Of these the most important is Vedānta. According to Sāṅkhya two co-eternal principles, soul and matter, constitute reality;⁴² Yoga adds Īshvara to these principles; He is conceived as a soul endowed with all good qualities but not as a creator, rewarder or punisher; He only helps His devotee in attaining *mokṣha* by removing the hindrances which stand in the latter's way.⁴³ Sāṅkhya and Yoga alike hold the soul to be intelligent and conscious; Vedānta goes further and believes that the soul is identical with Brahman, God.⁴⁴

The path of devotion was comparatively late in finding recognition in Hindu philosophy. Its main tenet is that God's grace frees the soul from bondage, but that it is by love and devotion that His grace can be won. It first finds exposition in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where the incarnation of Viṣṇu, Kṛiṣṇa, propounds his philosophy to the Pāṇḍava hero, Arjuna.⁴⁵ Though late in finding literary expression, the path of devotion, in all probability, owes its origin to Dravidian influences in Hinduism. There are scholars who believe that Kṛiṣṇa is the personification of the wisdom of the dark-complexioned Dravidian counselling the Aryan ruler and warrior; this opinion finds added justification in the fact that Kṛiṣṇa is traditionally depicted as a black man.

Of these paths, that of devotion was but a small trickle in the stream of Hindu thought at the time of the advent of Islam in the Subcontinent and the path of knowledge was limited to the intellectual elite. The vast bulk of the population followed some form of the path of action. For the masses the path of action signified only ritual and a code of behaviour based upon the demands of the caste system. The prevailing cults were mostly Śhaivite. Hence it is necessary to discuss them briefly.

⁴² *Ibid.*; also Garbe. ⁴³ Basham, pp. 325, 326.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 304. About Kṛiṣṇa being a black man, *ibid.*, p. 305. A standard translation of and commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* is by Radhakrishnan.



It has already been mentioned that in all probability the worship of Shiva antedates the coming of the Aryans into the Subcontinent; but this cannot be established definitely. The basic philosophy of the Shaivite cults was that Shiva is the *Pati*, or the Lord; the soul is co-eternal with Him; it becomes shackled with fetters by His power of obscuring reality; these fetters are mainly the taints and impressions of actions. Some of the sects believed in varying degrees of antinomianism; some of them carried it to disgusting lengths. Some Shaivite and Tāntric groups indulged in practices which were either phallic worship or orgies of sexual indulgence in the name of worship.

The eighth century saw revolutionary changes in the religious thought of South India. It has already been mentioned that the struggle of Brahminism against Buddhism and Jainism brought religious and philosophical problems into the arena of common discussion. However powerful Brahminism may have been politically, it yet had to make efforts to carry conviction to the minds of its new adherents, who had sometimes had to accept the dominant faith for reasons other than those of conviction. All religious controversy brings heart-searching with it, and the need for restatement of its beliefs by each contending faith. This necessarily brings changes in the emphasis on certain aspects of the teachings and a desire to seek a new interpretation of the principles held valid. Some of these changes one can notice in the Brahminical thought of the eighth century, but all cannot be explained so easily.

The first of these is a tendency towards a greater emphasis upon devotion and a reaction against mere ritualism. It can be argued that this could be the most natural reaction, because in an overwhelmingly Dravidian area the Dravidian traditions of devotionism would assert themselves strongly. There is considerable truth in this contention; without the existence of some such tendency, the revolution which is the subject of this discussion could not have been brought about. It should, however, be kept in mind that Brahminism was contending against Jainism and Buddhism, both of which followed mostly the path of knowledge. A certain amount of emotional quality is necessary for any religion to grip the hearts of men and neither Buddhism nor Jainism could be devoid of it, but it was not strong enough to create the mighty



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torrent of emotionalism which ultimately swept many a cherished belief away as if it were nothing but a dry weed waiting to be removed in the first flooding of the landscape. It has also been mentioned that *bhakti* or devotionism was but a little trickle in the religious thought of Brahminism. There is every reason to think that the new emphasis on emotional attachment to a personal god may at least have been strengthened by some foreign influence.

Another new trend is an effort to systematize religious thought and to bring it under the discipline of logical correlation. This also, it can be argued, is a natural development and need not have been inspired by a foreign tradition. It is true that uninhibited speculation resulting in an anarchy of thought without any systematization would one day invite thinkers to systematize it. The fact, however, remains that this speculation had been going on for centuries without any thinker feeling that systematizing was necessary. Besides, logical correlation of thinking is not in the Hindu tradition, which prides itself upon freeing thought and leaving it untrammelled by the limitations imposed by systematization. A positive creed which must keep thought strongly secured to the anchor of its belief has always the urge to bring all new thinking of a religious nature within its system, but Brahminism suffered from no such necessity. In the consideration of this question the factor of the date of the beginning of these developments is of great importance, because this is the time when the influence of Islam would make itself felt if it was to play any part in the moulding of Hindu thought. That these tendencies should assert themselves in the eighth century is most significant. Besides, as this discussion proceeds, it will become even more manifest that the inspiration came from the contacts with Islam. In the gradual unfolding of the process of assimilation of Islamic thought it would become clear that the later developments in Hinduism owed a good deal to its contacts with Islam; hence it would not be illogical to assign the beginning of the process to the same source.

There was a Christian community as well in South India and, therefore, it is worth while examining the possibility of their influence at this juncture. The relations between the centres of Christian propaganda and South India had grown



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weak by the third century. During the seventh and eighth centuries the Christian communities were too small and insignificant to be able to exercise any real influence. The Muslims had great prestige at this time, which the Christians did not possess, and therefore the possibility of the success of Christian propaganda was meagre. Nor indeed is there any record of Christian activity at this time, whereas there is incontrovertible testimony of Hindu communities having been converted to Islam. Besides there are the traditions, however nebulous and mixed up with legend, of the missionary activities of the Muslim mystics. More than anything else, there is the content of the influence itself. Islam laid the greatest emphasis upon monotheism, in which it was uncompromising. A belief in the mission of the Prophet was necessary; but the Prophet was a human being. He was inspired by God as had been other prophets before him. He did not come to abrogate the teachings of the earlier prophets, but to strengthen and purify them of errors introduced by their followers in course of time. Islam denied the divinity of any one except God Himself. Its strength lay in its being a simple and rational faith; in its freedom from dogma which the human reason finds difficult to accept; in its well-defined and clear beliefs; in its emotional quality of devotion to a personal God, Who is not indifferent to the needs of His devotees and Who answers their prayers, Who loves and can be approached through devotion and love; and in its insistence upon the equality of mankind. The sufis further enriched this emotional content of Islam through their passionate and intense longing for union with Him. This was a creed which brought comfort and solace to the afflicted and gave dignity to the downtrodden. It did not offend human reason, but its main appeal was to the heart, where religious conviction first sprouts.

The first effect of the contact of Hinduism with Islam seems to be the quickening of the heartbeat of religion; emotion begins to play a dominant role and God, from being impersonal and immanent or being not actively concerned with the everyday life of the individual, is gradually transformed into a transcendent, personal God and, as such, becomes the centre of the devotion and love of the individual. Even when He is thought of as immanent, He has some transcendental mani-

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festation and either directly or through some manifestation does concern Himself with the individual soul. The *Tirumurai* of the *Shaivite* literature begins to show strong tendencies in this direction.⁴⁶ The parallel collection of the *Vaishnavites*, the *Nālāyira-prabandham*, is just as emotional.⁴⁷ All this literature has many passages which would inspire any Muslim. The Tamil hymns have a richness of fervour which reminds one strongly of the Sufi poets of Islam. The *Shaivite adiyars* and the *Vaishnavite ālvārs* brought about a spiritual revolution of great magnitude; the executions of the Jains and the Buddhists by the fanatical converts to Brahminism from among the rulers did not strengthen the hold of Hinduism upon the South; it was the fervour of these hymn writers which was responsible for the real conversion of the people, though of course they were also helped by the theologians and scholastics.

The most important among the latter was *Shankara Āchārya*.⁴⁸ It is said of him that he brought order into the chaos of Hindu thinking. He assimilated into a consistent system what had hitherto been lying scattered. In this process he tried to remove any inconsistencies which he came across. This was by no means easy, because, as has been mentioned earlier, Hindu thought had been too spontaneous to be held in check by any considerations of consistency. *Shankara* solved the problem by rejecting any idea which was inconsistent with his understanding of Brahminical philosophy.⁴⁹ Some have doubted the wisdom of this action, because speculative thought was now put into the strait jacket of scholastic logic. It is remarkable that with *Shankara Āchārya*, Hinduism loses that quality of unfettered thinking which, in spite of its inconsistencies, gave so much to the philosophic content of human thought; besides, such an attempt was so divorced from the Brahminical tradition that it went contrary to its very

⁴⁶ *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, pp. 31 ff; Basham, p. 300. The *Tirumurai* was arranged by Nambiandernambi (985—1013) of Tanjore. The first seven groups forming the *Devarām* contain hymns which are used like the hymns of the Vedas.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, pp. 72 ff.; Hooper. The *Nālāyira-prabandham* is a *Vaishnava* collection by Nāthmunī (10th century) and is considered as sacred as the Vedas.

⁴⁸ Deussen; Basham, p. 328; *Cultural Heritage of India*, I, pp. 549—557; Barth, p. 75.

⁴⁹ Basham, p. 328.



spirit. This was a bid to forsake complexity for the purpose of achieving simplicity. It is said that the need arose because Buddhism and Jainism were to be fought through logic as well. This may be true, but the Islamic parallel comes so readily to the mind that it cannot be easily dismissed. Why should Shankara not borrow from the armoury of a faith which was particularly strong at this time in its polemics, especially if such ammunition could be of use against other adversaries as well? It is also not impossible that Shankara's astute mind could have discovered a potent danger from this quarter. Shankara believed in monism, which he considered to be the cornerstone of Hindu philosophy. According to his interpretation, God is the only reality, all else is illusion. God has no qualities or attributes. The world has evolved out of the principle of *māyā* or illusion and, therefore, is itself a mere illusion. The human ego is identical with God; its individuality is merely illusory because its reality is Brahman, the absolute God. The phenomenal world has a god as well who is illusory like the world; he is Ishvara; he possesses good attributes; he is the creator and dissolver of the universe; he rewards and punishes; the human soul can attain his grace and forgiveness. True freedom, however, lies in rising above the phenomenal and attaining through a state of deep trance, *samādhi*, union with Brahman Himself. Here was accommodation for two levels of development, the higher and the lower, for the elite and the populace. Shankara's systematization made Hindu thought easier to grasp and, through a partial simplification, gained it popularity.

Another prominent name in the history of religious thought of India is that of Rāmānuja who was born in the eleventh century.⁵⁰ He modified Shankara's ideas on monism and conceived of Brahman as possessing all good attributes and powers including those of creation, preservation and destruction. Out of Him emerged matter and souls. The soul is endowed with consciousness and can attain God through devotion. It first purifies itself by the performance of its duties; then, through concentration and meditation, it reaches the state of

⁵⁰ Basham, pp. 332—333; *Cultural Heritage of India*, I, pp. 558—571; *ibid.*, II, pp. 88—92. Rāmānuja's dates are uncertain; some place his death in the 12th century.



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complete devotion. The elite could practise *bhakti*; for the rest there was the path of self-surrender and complete trust in the preceptor. This reminds one strongly of Islam; God is omnipotent, omniscient, and the creator and preserver of the world; He will bring the world to an end; He possesses all good attributes. Man can attain Him by fulfilling his duties and through devotion to Him; by concentration and meditation, *muraqabah*, he can reach the stage of the beatific vision, *shuhūd*. Those who do not subject themselves to the discipline of mysticism should at least surrender themselves to God, which is the meaning of the word Islam. The emphasis upon complete faith in the preceptor also reminds one of the Islamic requirement of faith in the mission of the Prophet, or the sufi insistence upon the acceptance of the authority of the *shaiikh*.

Among the Shaivite thinkers as well there was a growing tendency to emphasize devotion to the Supreme Deity. The chief elements of Shaivite religion now came to be, at the practical and popular level, faith in Shiva and his grace; complete trust in the preceptor; concentration and the adoption of methods which would create a condition of ecstasy; protest against ritualism, especially idolatry; and the religious equality of all without distinctions of caste or wealth and power. Islamic parallels suggest themselves immediately; the belief in God, in the Prophet as the inspired guide, or, at the lower level, the *shaiikh* of the Sufis and the mystic disciplines for the attainment of a condition of ecstasy; the condemnation of idolatry and the Sufi insistence upon the esoteric values of religion; and the Islamic insistence upon the fundamental equality of mankind. There were two sects among the Shaivites who went even further, the Lingāyats and the Siddhārs, and these deserve special mention.⁵¹

The Lingāyats, also known as Jangamas, are an old sect of the Shaivites.⁵² They were, however, reformed by Bāsava towards the end of the twelfth century. Bāsava's reforms were revolutionary and gave Lingāyatism characteristics which distinguish it from other Hindu sects. The Lingāyats

⁵¹ Chand, p. 104.

⁵² See C. P. Brown in *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, January 1840, pp. 145 ff.; also, Thurston, IV, pp. 236 ff.; Basham, p. 335.



believe in one God, Who is infinite, immutable, and the possessor of most excellent attributes. He is the creator of matter and souls; these souls He redeems by manifesting Himself as the guide of the individual souls as well of the universe. Bāsava, the teacher, was, according to the Lingāyat beliefs, the incarnation of the Redeemer, whose divinity passed to his successors. The novices were initiated into the faith by the preceptor through a ritual “analogous to those used among Musalmans”. God can be attained through love, progress in which is through firm belief in God, the renunciation of egoism, concentration and blissful union. Even more than these ideas, the code of Lingāyat behaviour seems to have been deeply affected by Islam. Marriage is based upon the consent of the contracting parties, especially of the bride; child marriage is condemned; widows are treated with respect and are permitted to marry again; the initiated believers live together, interdine and intermarry; they do not cremate their dead but bury them; they do not believe in metempsychosis.

The Siddhārs were strict monotheists.⁵³ They called God Shiva; but otherwise their break with Shaivism was almost complete. They rejected the beliefs, the scriptures, and the social institutions of Brahminism, including caste. They did not believe in metempsychosis. They were monotheists. They relied for guidance on a supreme religious preceptor. They seem to have been so deeply influenced by Islam that they have occasionally borrowed even the Sufi imagery.⁵⁴ They had a glowing faith that one day their ideal of the brotherhood of man would triumph against the institution of caste.⁵⁵

In tracing the development of religious thought in any age, it is extremely difficult to define with exactitude the various influences whose interplay produced certain beliefs and traditions, yet in the study of the impact of one culture

⁵³ *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, pp. 303—319. “If Siva alone rewards us, loving him is the highest virtue, and the worship of other gods is of little use”. Pillai, II, p. 27.

⁵⁴ E.g., God is “the Light whom the earth and heaven cannot contain” (Caldwell, “Tamil Popular Poetry”, *Indian Antiquary*, I, Bombay, 1872, p. 203); or,

“That Highest One is not a beauteous rose
Nor doth He hide Himself in sweet perfume” (*ibid.*, p. 177).

⁵⁵ “When shall our race be one great brotherhood
Unbroken by the tyranny of caste?” (*ibid.*, p. 102).



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upon another it is assumed that if certain developments followed such an impact, they should be connected with it. Even when a culture completely conquers and overwhelms another, it seldom succeeds in utterly obliterating all traces of the defeated adversary. When two cultures come into close contact on a basis of equality, they tend to absorb only such features from each other as do not seem absolutely strange; it is through a process of selection, emphasis and suppression that cultures often borrow from one another. They are willing to accept what they like and can easily assimilate; this in itself creates a predilection in favour of those elements that are not entirely foreign; then there is a renewed emphasis on such elements in one's own culture as appear to have received added validity because of their confirmation in another culture from which one is ready to borrow; and lastly those features which come into conflict with this tendency to borrow are first of all considered to be unimportant and are ignored; if the conflict is too violent to permit their being ignored, they are discarded and suppressed, it being often discovered that they offend one's own sense of values. When there is spontaneous growth without the help of external stimuli, the process may look similar, but actually it is different, because then the growth is not in conformity with extraneous values and features. Brahminism had been developing for many centuries in the course of which it had produced profound philosophies, but the general direction of its growth was not the same as after the impact of Islam. When, later, Hinduism freed itself from the influence of Islam, its growth once again changed its direction. The parallelism with Islam is too marked in the general tendencies of the development under discussion to be lightly dismissed; yet there is considerable difference of opinion among scholars on this point, and it is, therefore, necessary to deal with the matter briefly.

Those who argue in favour of spontaneous growth and reject the theory of external influences emphasize the fact that most of the elements in the development were present in Brahminism at a very early date. For instance, *bhakti* as a religious term can be traced back to the second century before

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Christ, and, in a more nebulous manner, even to the eighth.⁵⁶ Similarly the consciousness of the need of adoring a single god can be traced to the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Barth argues that monotheistic concepts and the idea of devotion were indigenous to India.⁵⁷ He finds considerable support for his point of view among other Western scholars.⁵⁸ It is, however, one thing to say that these ideas were independently born in India in the train of religious and philosophic speculation and quite another to hold that the belief in them did not receive added emphasis as the result of contacts with a foreign culture. Besides, Barth was arguing against the probability of this consciousness having come through contacts with Christianity, where he is correct, because the points of similarity are so meagre and the possibilities so remote that no other conclusion could be drawn. The question of the influence of Islam, however, falls into an entirely different category. Pope was right when he discerned some Semitic influence at work; but he, along with several others, thought that this influence came from Christianity.⁵⁹ Weber was of the opinion that this influence was effective at a very early date, indeed in the period when the Purānas and the great epics were written.⁶⁰ There are many difficulties in this thesis. There is very little positive evidence regarding the activities and the influence of Nestorian missionaries. Pantaenus of Alexandria is said to have shown some interest in the conversion of the Hindus, but we do not know whether it took any concrete shape and was of such a nature as to influence the Hindu thought currents profoundly. The apostle St. Thomas did perhaps succeed in converting some Hindus in South India, but at that time the main development of thought was taking place in the North. All this is, however, irrelevant from our point of view because we are not concerned with the early developments. The Christian communities of the South had existed for centuries; there is no explanation of why their influence should have asserted itself so remarkably after the contacts with Islam

⁵⁶ Husain, p. 3, quoting the opinions of Garbe and Buhler.

⁵⁷ Barth, p. 211.

⁵⁸ Chand, pp. 106, 107.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Husain, p. 4.



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had historically come into existence. Besides, as has been mentioned earlier, there is the question of the content of this influence and its general direction. These do not point at all in the direction of Christianity as the source of inspiration. It was Fawcett who, in all probability, first drew the attention of scholars to the likelihood of Islam having been the cause of the new orientation in the Hindu thought of South India.⁶¹ He also thinks that Shankara was influenced by Islam, with which he came into contact in his early life. Barth also notices the fact that the great religious movements took place in the South where the Muslims had settled in the early history of Islam.⁶² Of the later writers Tara Chand has reached the same conclusion. He argues that taken singly most of the elements in the new religious movements of the south were derived from ancient systems; "but the elements in their totality and in their peculiar emphasis betray a singular approximation to Muslim faith and, therefore, make the argument for Islamic influence probable".⁶³

It is true that all the evidence is circumstantial and is not based upon recorded facts or philological data; this can be explained, however, by the reluctance of the Hindus to record historical facts and the fashion then prevailing in Muslim historiography. The lives of the Hindu saints themselves are shrouded in legendary accounts and most of the facts connected with their biography have been gleaned from subsidiary sources and often there is little certainty beyond the general trend of their teachings. Under these circumstances an historical reconstruction of the story of the acceptance of any external influence would be difficult. On the Muslim side, such a subtle and slow process as the penetration of Islamic ideas into other cultures and societies could hardly attract the attention of the historiographers. The absence of philological evidence can be explained by the fact that Islamic ideas do not seem to have penetrated through the study of Islamic literature but by means of oral discussions and observation. The introduction of foreign words into the classical Sanskrit, which had ceased to be the language of every day discourse, was

⁶¹ *Anthropology Bulletin*, III, 1.

⁶² Barth, pp. 210—212.

⁶³ Chand, p. 107.



highly unlikely; the popular expression of the new ideas was mostly through emotional hymns and poems and not so much through serious discussion in the books of theology and philosophy. Besides, religions are most reluctant to acknowledge their debt to contemporary and competing faiths. There are sufficient indications in the legendary accounts of various Hindu saints as well as the historical data available that Islam had gradually come to be looked upon as a source of potential danger to the prevailing philosophies. There is, for instance, the legend about the birth of Shankara that he was the reincarnation of Shiva in the shape of the child of a widow because the king of the area had been converted to Islam and the country had to be saved from conversion to that religion.⁶⁴ The legend may embody the truth that Shankara was moved to remove the contradictions in the thought of the previous Hindu philosophers partly at least to combat the challenge of a systematized monolithic faith like Islam. The prophecies of Channabāsava, one of the successors of Bāsava, the founder of neo-Lingāyatism, refer to the probability of the country passing under Muslim rule and promise its ultimate deliverance from that subjection.⁶⁵

In view of all that has been said before, it would be difficult to deny that Islam did play an important role in the modification and development of Hindu thought and, for some time at least, changed the direction of its growth. This was no inconsiderable achievement, for Hinduism was not a primitive culture waiting to be awakened by the impact of a more developed philosophy. It had centuries of development behind it and had a highly complex body of thought, the result of ages of thinking and speculation. The Hindus were a culture-conscious people; they were prone to think of all outsiders as barbarians. They had termed even the Greeks barbarians; indeed *yāvana*, the Indian equivalent of Ionia, was a term of contempt, not respect. Islam had little to offer, at this stage in particular, in the way of complex thought or intellectual hair-splitting. Brahminical thought, however, had its weaknesses, even contradictions. The main drawback was that it was too speculative and lacked that emotional quality which makes a

⁶⁴ Fawcett; *Anthropology Bulletin*, III, 1; Chand, p. 107.

⁶⁵ Chand, p. 120.



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conviction living and potent. Another weakness in Hinduism was that at the popular level it was mostly a code of behaviour without much regard to the quality of belief. The lowest strata were sunk in superstition too gross to withstand scrutiny by any rational mind and helpless in the face of hostile polemics. Besides, the permanent disabilities imposed by the caste system upon large sections of the population could be exploited by a religion which was free from them and believed in the equality of mankind. These weaknesses have been exploited by Islam and Christianity alike at different times, and the caste system has also been the cause of internal revolt which has occasionally thrown up new sects and even religions. All this, however, does not minimize the magnitude of the achievement of Islam in having influenced such an ancient and well-developed system of thought. There are, however, two major considerations which detract from the greatness of the achievement. The first is that this is not what Islam consciously set itself the task of doing; the second is that by this achievement it created serious problems for itself. These points, however, will be discussed subsequently.



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II

Islam gains a Foothold in the North-West

There were numerous Muslim communities in South India living under Hindu rule; they were prosperous and influential. We are not certain if there were any Muslim trading communities in North India before the advent of Muslim rule. The coast of Sind was inhospitable because of the policies of local rulers. Being in close proximity to the expanding Arab power, they were naturally not too keen upon creating centres of Arab influence in their dominions. We therefore do not hear of any Arab trade settlements in Sind on the eve of Muslim conquest. The Sind Hindus do not seem to have had the same horror of seafaring as some Hindus of South India. There were nests of pirates on the Sind coast, which were strong enough to disrupt the even flow of commerce between the Arab ports and the commercial centres of South India and Ceylon; we also hear in some of the early accounts of *baniyās*, by which name were known the trading communities among the Hindus even then, travelling by Arab ships.¹ We also meet them in one or two Arab ports.² It may be concluded from this that Sind did not feel the same need of encouraging Arab traders as the Hindu states of

¹ Buzurg bin *Shahryār*, pp. 148, 165.

² *Sairāfī*, p. 146.

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South India. The Hindus had no objection to river navigation, because it did not take them to lands where the caste taboos could not be observed; they find mention as river navigators from the earliest times.³ The same is true of overland commerce within the Subcontinent. Hence there was not much incentive for the Arabs to penetrate the kingdoms of the North for trade; yet it is impossible to reach any definite conclusion in this connection. The accounts of the Arab geographers contain such full references to Qanauj that they raise a suspicion in the mind that Arab relations with that area were intimate and direct; but it might well be that their knowledge was derived from the *baniyās* and not from Arab traders.⁴ The Umayyad government had, for some time, been protesting to the rulers of Sind about the depredations of the Sindhi pirates upon Muslim commerce; matters came to a head when they intercepted some presents sent by the ruler of Ceylon to Ḥajjāj, the Umayyad governor of Iraq. When the Arab government demanded action, the ruler of Sind expressed his inability to suppress the pirates. On this the Arabs decided to invade Sind, which resulted in its annexation. This was achieved by Muḥammad bin Qāsim, a lad seventeen lunar years old, in a campaign lasting for less than eighteen months in 712—13. The young conqueror excelled himself in setting up an administration on liberal principles.⁵ The establishment of Muslim rule in this area opened a significant chapter in the history of Islam and of the Subcontinent.

The boundaries of the Muslim state of Sind varied considerably at different times depending upon the vicissitudes in the fortunes of its rulers; to the Arab geographers, however, all the basin of the river Indus beyond the foothills of the Western and Northern ranges was vaguely Sind. The name is derived from the Sanskrit Sindhu, the name of the river Indus.⁶ Locally the river is known as Sindh even now. Actually Hind is only a phonetic variation of Sind; from Hind are

³ E.g., Buzurg bin Shahrīār, p. 104.

⁴ Abū-'l-Fidā, *Taqwīm-u'l-buldān*, p. 360. Ibn Hawqal (p. 227) says definitely that certain areas were inaccessible to Muslim traders.

⁵ For details, see Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, pp. 2, 3.

⁶ Al-Jāhīz, *Fakhr-u's-sawdān 'ala-'l-baiḍān*, II. p. 105; Sairāfi, p. 127.



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derived the names Indus and India. Philologically India is really the land of the river Indus. There are instances where Hind and Sind have been used as synonymous; the difference between the two words grew up gradually and later.

The conquest of Sind opened the way for new cultural contacts between the Muslims and the Hindus. Without denying the significance of what the Arabs learnt from the Hindus, it is only fair that there should be a proper assessment of this debt, which has been exaggerated. The most important acquisition from the Arab point of view was that of the Hindu numerals, which, with superficial changes, form the basis of modern arithmetic, based as it is on the decimal system. The other fields were those of astronomy (including astrology), medicine and philosophy. The Arabs learnt chess from the Hindus and showed appreciation of their music, painting and sculpture. It is possible to trace some influence of Sind in one or two strains of Arab music; the Muslim Arabs did not cultivate sculpture because of their horror of idolatry; there have been points of contact between Muslim and Indian traditions of painting outside the Subcontinent, but they mostly came later and there was no immediate blossoming of Art as the result of the Arab conquest of Sind. It is difficult to trace much Indian influence at the Umayyad court of Damascus; Arab interest in Indian sciences deepens with the rise of the Barmecides at the Abbasid court of Baghdad. They were converts from Buddhism and their cultural contacts with Hinduism were more intimate; hence it was not unexpected that the Barmecides would show greater interest in Hindu learning.⁷ Some contacts in the earlier period were not unknown; even before the conquest of Sind the Arabs had contacts with South India. Before the rise of Islam, the Persian forces had contained contingents of Jāt troops; with

⁷ It is now generally accepted by scholars that the Barmecides were originally Buddhists; their ancestor Barmak was attached to the Buddhist monastery of Balkh, Nava Vihāra (transliterated by Muslim writers as Naw Bihār and erroneously read as *naw bahār*. Nava Vihāra simply means the new monastery; *naw bahār* in Persian means the fresh spring. Balkh at the time of the Muslim conquest was a Buddhist land. The description of Nava Vihāra given by Hammadhānī, Ibn-u'l-Faḳīh (p. 323), when correctly interpreted leaves no doubt about its having been a Buddhist monastery. The word *ishbat* in the Arabic text is a scribe's error for *istub*, an Aabic corruption of *stupa*.



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defeat of the Persians, many of their Jāt soldiers took service under the Muslims. We hear of them under the caliph 'Alī.⁸ It is said that once when 'A'ishah, the Prophet's widow, fell ill, she was treated by a Jāt physician.⁹

With the rise of the Barmecides, however, these relations became deeper. We read of a party of Sindhi scholars who visited Baghdad in 771. They had taken several books with them; one of which was the famous *Siddhānta*, which was translated into Arabic with the help of an Arab mathematician, Ibrāhīm Fizārī. This book gained great popularity among Arab astronomers as *As-Sind-Hind*.¹⁰ Two other books on astronomy were translated into Arabic: these were *Āryabhaṭīya* and *Khaṇḍakhādīyaka*.¹¹ Similarly some Indian physicians practising the Ayurvedic system of medicine were invited to Baghdad, where they were instrumental in translating a few books into Arabic.¹² The better known of these translations are *Sasru*, *Sindistān*, *Nidān*, and an Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia. The names of the Sanskrit originals can only be guessed. Some other books on miscellaneous topics were translated but they did not exercise so much influence. *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, a book of fables illustrating points of ethics, has its origin in Indian sources and has been popular in many parts of the Muslim world.¹³ These are not insignificant contributions, yet they do not justify the view that they form the foundation of Arab learning. The debt which the Arabs owed to the Greeks was infinitely greater even in the fields of astronomy and medicine. The part played by the Arab numerals, which were borrowed from the Hindus, is certainly unique. There is no record of the impact which the Arab conquest had on Hindu science and learning. The scholars who went to Baghdad generally settled down in the city and they or their

⁸ Ṭabarī, Battle of Jamal quoted by Nadwī, Saiyid Sulaimān, '*Arab wa Hind ke ta'alluqāt*', pp. 11, 12.

⁹ Bukhārī, *Bāb bai'-u'l-khādim*, p. 84.

¹⁰ Al-Bīrūnī, I, pp. 152-154; II, p. 18; Al-Qifṭī, p. 177.

¹¹ Al-Andalusī, pp. 49-50.

¹² Al-Jāhīz, *Kitāb-u'l-bayān*, p. 40.

¹³ This book was translated from Arabic into Persian by Naṣr-u'llah bin Muḥammad bin 'Abd-u'l Ḥamīd Munshī. A later version is known as *Anwār-i-Suhelī*. The original is said to be the *Panchatāntra*.



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descendants were converted to Islam.¹⁴ Their contacts with Arabs did not lead to any contribution to the volume of learning in Sanskrit. The Muslim influence on Hindu learning came much later.

The question of the impact of the Arab conquest upon the religious life of Sind is more complex and requires a somewhat detailed examination. An important factor in the situation was the struggle between Brahminism and Buddhism in the area. When Hiuen Tsang visited the Subcontinent in the middle of the seventh century, he still found Mahāyāna Buddhism the prevailing religion in Western areas. He does mention the existence of Shaivite temples, but the plains in the basin of the Indus and several valleys in the hills were mainly Buddhist.¹⁵ The *Chachnāmāh* mentions the Buddhists and Buddhist temples in Sind quite frequently; sometimes the word Brahmin is used indiscriminately for any native priest, whereas the context makes it amply clear that the reference is to Buddhist priests in some places and on other occasions Hindu priests are clearly indicated; many a time the word *samnt* is used for the Buddhists; Buddha and his worshippers are mentioned explicitly as well; in short the picture which clearly emerges is that in many areas of Sind Buddhism was still strong and flourishing. According to Hiuen Tsang Buddhism had been playing a losing game for some time, for which it had only itself to blame, because Mahāyāna had gone so far in making compromises with Brahminism that it had lost its stamina. This does not mean that Buddhism was not jealous of the growth of Brahminism after it had been so long in decline. The pacifist doctrines of Buddhism had little appeal for the warlike Kshatriyas and more particularly for the foreign warrior elements which had been absorbed into the social system of the Subcontinent after their conquests. It was mainly through them that Brahminism was achieving political dominance; among the masses it worked through peaceful penetration and gradual corrosion of the doctrines and practices of Buddhism. The *Chachnāmāh* conveys the im-

¹⁴ E.g., Ṣālīḥ, a Muslim name, was borne by the son of a Hindu (or Buddhist) physician, Bahlah (Uṣaibi'ah, II, p. 34).

¹⁵ Watters, I, pp. 221 ff.; Cowell, pp. 70-71.



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pression that in Sind there were still Buddhist chiefs left who had accepted the supremacy of the Hindu dynasty.¹⁶ Some of these rulers were abbots of fortified monasteries with extensive demesnes and defended by strong contingents of warriors. Even in townships where the fighting and ruling classes were Hindus, the artisans, merchants and many others were Buddhists. In other places the main temples were still Buddhist. It stands out clearly from the chronicle that the Buddhists were by no means ardent supporters of the ruling family.

There are several instances of Buddhist collusion with the invaders. For instance, it was a priest who came and told Muḥammad bin Qāsim to aim at the flag and the pinnacle of the temple in Debal.¹⁷ It was another priest who acted as the messenger between the Arab prisoners in Debal and the Arab general.¹⁸ It is not impossible that the prophecy regarding the fall of Debal if the flag of the temple could be demolished was fabricated for the benefit of the Muslims. Nīrūn, which was under a Buddhist chief, had been in correspondence with the Arabs even before Muḥammad bin Qāsim set foot on the soil of Sind.¹⁹ It made a show of resistance because the chief was away with Dāhir, the king of Sind, when the Arabs appeared before its gates, but as soon as the chief came back, he apologised and surrendered the town. Siwistān, the area around modern Sehwan and Sibi, was under Bajhrā, a first cousin of the ruler. The Buddhists advised him not to fight because "they could intercede for him" with the Arabs "who never broke their promises". When Bajhrā turned this suggestion down, they made it amply clear that they did not want to embroil themselves in fighting. Bajhrā soon despaired of putting up resistance and the Arabs gained the

¹⁶ The ruling dynasty was Hindu. Chach, the founder of the dynasty, when first employed as a high official, claimed to know the four Vedas well (Kūfi, pp. 17, 18.)

¹⁷ The temple was a Buddhist shrine (Al-Balādhurī, p. 437). About the suggestion having been given by a priest, see Kūfi, p. 104.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 105, 106.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116. They had entered into an agreement with Hajjāj, when the previous expedition came under Budail. It failed because of the death of the leader.



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fort with the cooperation of the Buddhist population.²⁰ Similarly Kāka Kotak, a Buddhist chief of the area near Sehwan, advised his followers and Jāts not to fight against the Muslims, because Buddhist priests had told him that the area was destined to fall into the hands of the Muslims. He not only tendered this advice to those who had intended hostilities against the Arabs, but went to the Arab camp and gave them valuable information.²¹ There are several other instances of such surrenders and even active cooperation on the part of Buddhists; only one more will be mentioned here. It was a Buddhist chieftain who provided the boats which made it possible for Muḥammad bin Qāsim to cross the Indus.²² Thus there is overwhelming evidence to justify the conclusion that there were many Buddhists who were not averse to Arab conquest and indeed cooperated with the invaders. There are indications to the effect that the Arabs inspired greater confidence among them than their own compatriots. Even if all allowance for the desire to join the winning side is made, the extent of Buddhist antipathy for the Hindus seems to have been considerable. This made the task of the conqueror easier; but did it in any way help the propagation of Islam?

Today the prevailing religion in Sind is Islam. It would, however, be rash to jump to the conclusion that this was achieved within a short time of the establishment of Muslim rule. It is on record that the Arabs not only did not exercise any pressure upon the population to accept Islam but they also gave them all the facilities which they extended to the *dhimmīs* in other areas which they conquered.²³ After the completion of the conquest, places of worship were left unmolested and we read of the existence of some of these temples for several centuries in the accounts of the Arab travellers and

²⁰ Kūfi, pp. 119 ff.

²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 121 ff.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 208 ff. On p. 202, the word *dhimmī* finds mention. There are numerous references in *Chachnāmāh* to the terms granted to the non-Muslims; the underlying principle is the same; the people were treated as *dhimmīs*. This was not an easy decision, because hitherto no idolators had been given that status and there was no precedent, Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli*, pp. 2, 3.



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geographers.²⁴ The people were permitted to retain the administration of their personal law, religious institutions and local and communal affairs. The special position of the Brahmins in Hindu society was recognized.²⁵ In the sphere of governmental activity, the revenue administration was entrusted mostly to the natives, a step which created the well-known Hindu community of the 'Āmils in Sind. There was, however, considerable opportunity for missionary effort. Having been corroded from within by the infiltration of Hindu beliefs and practices, Buddhism could not inspire that confidence which is born of philosophic understanding. Loyalties which are based upon sentimental attachment alone can be easily undermined by persistent missionary activity. The existence of a large number of Buddhists mostly ignorant of their religion gave a good opportunity to the Muslims; but the scope for the expansion of Hinduism also was not negligible. Now that the irritant of Hindu rule had been removed, the penetration of Hindu ideas could be more rapid. It would make a fascinating study if we possessed the necessary material to trace the competition between Hinduisim and Islam to absorb the Buddhists. At present there are only a few scattered indications, too meagre to enable us to reach any definite conclusions. The only obvious fact is that Buddhism was not able to put up much resistance. Whereas in the course of the centuries Islam became the dominant religion and Hinduism retained the loyalty of quite a large number, Buddhism completely disappeared from the scene.

There is little to guide us in any endeavour to find out how long Buddhism endured in Sind and the adjoining areas. Muṭahhir, writing in the tenth century, mentions that the main religions of the Subcontinent were Brahminism and Buddhism.²⁶ When Al-Bīrūnī came to India, Buddhism did not attract his attention in the Western areas where it had once been dominant. This, however, is not a clear indication

²⁴ E.g., Al-Balādhurī, p. 437, mentions that the great temple of Debal still existed in the reign of the Abbasid caliph, Mu'taṣim (833-842) (Muqaddasī, p. 480).

²⁵ Kūfī, pp. 208, 209, 210; Qānī', f. 259b; also Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli*, pp. 2, 3. The appointment of the natives helped the Arabs in stabilizing the administration (Kūfī, pp. 210-210).

²⁶ Al-Maqqdisī, IV, pp. 9-19.



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because Al-Bīrūnī's approach was mainly academic, and he relied mostly upon the Brahmin men of learning for his information. If there were a few sects still alive tainted with Buddhism or professing to be Buddhists but deeply affected by Hinduism, they were not likely to draw the attention of a foreigner whose main object seems to have been the study of the Brahminical religion as contained in their books and scriptures.

The establishment of Muslim rule in Sind opened the way for the propagation of Islam. In the wake of the conquest came some important conversions. One reads of several chieftains and tribes accepting Islam on an invitation from Muḥammad bin Qāsim.²⁷ It seems that these were mostly Buddhists or recent Buddhist converts to Hinduism. Some of them might have been merely political opportunists; but many must have changed their faith through conviction, because there was a good deal in the beliefs and conduct of the Arabs to win admirers for their way of life. With greater contacts with the non-Muslims, Islamic ideas must have attained greater currency. Muslim traders and others who came into close contact with the populace were in all probability as active in Sind as they were elsewhere. However, all this is conjecture because there is little record of the facts. There are merely occasional glimpses which the contemporary writers give us into the history of conversions which show that missionary activity was not dormant. The Muslim missionary sometimes ventured even into areas where Islam had not established its domination; we read, for instance, in Balādhurī of the conversion of a Hindu rāja of 'Asīfān, somewhere in the area now included in the Panjab, as the result of disappointment with his own faith and the persuasion of the Muslim traders in his dominions.²⁸ Similarly we hear of the Qur'ān having been translated into the native language by a Muslim scholar at the request of a Hindu ruler whose capital was somewhere to the north of Muslim Sind. This, it is reported, took place in

²⁷ Kūfī mentions at various places that chieftains and others accepted Islam on the invitation of Muḥammad bin Qāsim (e.g., p. 209).

²⁸ Al-Balādhurī, p. 446.



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883.²⁹ Debates between Hindus and Muslims as well as between Muslims and Buddhists have also been mentioned; indeed even Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate, was the venue of some of these discussions.³⁰ All this does not indicate an atmosphere of apathy and indifference so far as the relations between Islam and other religions were concerned; it also shows that there was free discussion among their advocates, irrespective of the religion of the rulers.³¹ It has already been mentioned that Muḥammad bin Qāsim formally invited the native populace to accept Islam; another formal invitation came from the pious Umayyad caliph, 'Umar ibn 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz.³² On this occasion as well, the response was good. The larger number of converts came from Buddhism.³³

It seems that Buddhism was passing through a crisis at this time and even some of its leaders had lost faith in the validity of their religion. Perhaps the main reasons were political and psychological. In the Subcontinent Buddhism had been steadily losing ground to Hinduisim; in Sind itself it had lost political power with the rise of Hindu rulers. It is difficult to know with certainty who was the first Hindu monarch of Sind after Buddhism had been established in the region; but Chach certainly was a Hindu. He claimed to know the four vedas well.³⁴ The next ruler, Chandra, was a pious Buddhist. It is difficult to judge from the meagre accounts available if the invasion of Sind by the Hindu ruler of Qanauj had a religious motive in it and whether Mehta, the governor of Siwistān, who invited the invader, was a Hindu and intrigued with a foreign power to dislodge his Buddhist sovereign.³⁵

²⁹ Buzurg bin Shahryār, p. 4. The English translation has the report on pp. 2-4.

³⁰ Al-Murtaḍā, pp. 31-34.

³¹ A debater was sent all the way from Baghdad at the request of an Indian ruler to engage in arguments with his scholars (*ibid.*). Mas'ūdī (p. 254) mentions that the Hindu governor of Cambay used to engage in religious discussion any learned Muslim who happened to visit the city. Actually the references are too numerous to be quoted here.

³² Elliot and Dowson, *Historians of Sind*, p. 26.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Kūfī, pp. 17-18. The premature decrepitude of Buddhism in the Subcontinent has been noticed by Barth, p. 136.

³⁵ Kūfī, pp. 50-52.



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In any case Chandra's rule did not last for more than seven years.³⁶ Hindu rule was restored after his death. The Buddhists certainly did not evince any feelings of hostility towards the Arab invaders which is a significant indication of their frustration and dislike of Hindu rule. This seems to have provided them with the motive for fabricating the prophecies that Sind was destined to be ruled by the Arabs. Again and again we come across the assertion that the ancient seers and contemporary astrologers alike had prophesied the fall of the Hindu dynasty and the rise of the Arab power.³⁷ The previous existence of such prophecies also cannot be ruled out, because the Buddhist monks formed an international confraternity; they were great travellers and went from one country to another; the more shrewd among them might have foreseen the possible expansion of the Arab power into Sind, especially when vital Arab trade interests were threatened. In any case, whether fabricated to help the Arabs or existing because some well-informed monks had foreseen the victory of Arab arms, the prophecies seem to have been spread by Buddhist teachers.³⁸ The thought must have arisen in many a mind that if the seers of Buddhism had prognosticated the victory of Islam, the latter must in some way or other be favoured by the powers presiding over human destiny. The leaders had seen the loss of huge territories to the rising power of Islam in many a neighbouring land where, before the Muslim conquest, Buddhism had ruled supreme. In its struggle with Hinduism, Buddhism had started by making fundamental concessions to the former, and when a religion does that for too long, it is liable to lose its moral stamina and power of resistance. This explains both the many conversions to Islam in this area and the eventual disappearance of Buddhism. Besides, to many Islam appeared as a deliverer from the tyranny of Hinduism and the example of tolerance set by the Arabs seems to have inclined many a Buddhist heart towards Islam.

With the establishment of the Arab rule came Muslim

³⁶ Kūfī, p. 53.

³⁷ E.g., *Ibid.*, p. 121.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, e.g., pp. 104, 105, 121.



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settlements with mosques, schools and colleges. One of these settlements was Manṣūrah, which was intended to provide, like other strongholds, a centre of Arab military power. The founder was 'Umar, the son of the celebrated Muḥammad bin Qāsim.³⁹ As it was established under the Umayyads, there is no truth in the statement that it was named after the Abbasid caliph, Manṣūr; Mas'ūdī also is wrong when he ascribes its foundation to the governor Manṣūr bin Jamhūr. The city seems to have been founded in the third or fourth decade of the eighth century of the Christian era. The probable site was an island in the Indus which now lies eight miles from Shahdadpur. It became the capital fairly early and retained this position until Sind was broken into several emirates. Even then Manṣūrah was the capital of one of them. It soon came to be a centre of Islamic culture and produced authors and theologians.⁴⁰ A few years before its capture by Maḥmūd of Ghazni, it had become an Ismā'īlī stronghold either through the conversion of the ruler or an act of war.⁴¹

Multan was in existence at the time of the Arab conquest. It submitted after a stiff resistance; having stood siege for two months and losing hope of help from any quarter, the garrison might well have felt discouraged, but the city was taken only when a resident disclosed a weak spot to the Arabs. The main temple still seems to have been a Buddhist shrine. It is difficult to say whether the famous temple which later became a centre of pilgrimage was this very shrine converted into a Hindu place of worship or a later building.⁴² Al-Bīrūnī thought it was dedicated to the Sun.⁴³ By the middle of the ninth century Multan became the capital of an emirate of the same name. This Muslim state was often threatened by the neighbouring Hindu states, which shows that in course

³⁹ Al-Balādhurī, p. 444.

⁴⁰ Muqaddasī, p. 479.

⁴¹ Ibn-u'l-Aṭhīr, IX, p. 143.

⁴² Kūfī, pp. 212, 213, has a description of the original shrine; the image was so lifelike that Muḥammad bin Qāsim drew his sword; such realism in sculpture was a Buddhist characteristic; Hindu images are more symbolic and not so realistic. The description of the later shrine is contained in several Arab accounts, e.g., Muqaddasī, p. 483; Isṭaḥrī, p. 84; Ibn Ḥawqal, pp. 228-229.

⁴³ Al-Bīrūnī, I, p. 116.



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of time Multan came to be a frontier town for the world of Islam. For this reason the Muslim rulers maintained a fairly strong force, but they also used diplomacy. They had taken up the guardianship of the great Hindu temple, which seems to have been a source of income to the state. All the offerings of value were taken by the ruler, part of which he spent on the priests and the maintenance of the temple.⁴⁴ This is an excellent commentary on the relations between the rulers and their Hindu subjects. The Sun god seems to have extended his benevolent protection to the rulers as a reward for their tolerance, because if their Hindu neighbours made hostile preparations, the Muslim rulers threatened to destroy the temple and its idol and this won them peace. Multan was visited by several Muslim travellers and writers; one of these was Ibn Ḥawqal of Baghdad who came to this city in 977; at that time the rulers and the people were still Sunnis.⁴⁵ Eight years later when Muqaddasī came to Multan, he found the rulers Ismā'īlī *Shī'ahs* who recited the *khuṭbah* in the name of the Fatimid caliphs of Egypt.⁴⁶ This change seems to have been brought about by a violent revolution.⁴⁷ The Ismā'īlī rulers of Multan have been generally described as Carmathians, but it is difficult to be definite about this. Maḥmūd of Ghazni took Multan in 1005 and cleared it of the Ismā'ilīs. We are told by the Arab traveller Ibn Ḥawqal that the people of Multan, both Muslims and non-Muslims, dressed alike.⁴⁸ Another Arab traveller, Muqaddasī, praises the people of Multan for their high standard of personal and commercial morality. He found them prosperous.⁴⁹ Arabic and Sindhi were the languages which Ibn Ḥawqal found in use.⁵⁰ The name Sindhi has perhaps been used loosely for the local dialect; it is also possible that the languages of Sind and Multan have diverged so much in later times. Arabic

⁴⁴ Yāqūt, see under the name Multan. Yāqūt quotes *Iṣṭakhṛī*.

⁴⁵ Ibn Ḥawqal does not mention the Ismā'ilīs in connection with Multan (pp. 228-229).

⁴⁶ Muqaddasī, p. 481.

⁴⁷ Al-Birūnī, I, p. 116. A change of dynasty indicates a violent revolution.

⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥawqal, p. 323.

⁴⁹ Muqaddasī, p. 480.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal, p. 232.



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and Sindhi were also spoken in other important towns where the Arabs had settlements in Sind. Multan became famous as a centre of Islamic culture; the same is true of Debal which produced a number of famous Muslim scholars.

The general picture which emerges from these accounts is that the Arab conquest of Sind converted it into a centre of Islamic culture, which in course of time produced poets, theologians and other men of learning.⁵¹ This area was sufficiently important to attract Arab travellers and writers. It also attracted the missionaries of the Ismā'īlī sect, which gained such influence that it was ultimately able to seize the government of at least two important emirates. It is obvious that such a change could not have come about in a day. The Ismā'īlī missionaries must have been at work for some time, and because they had a tradition of working silently and secretly the extent of their activities can only be guessed from some well-known facts. In those days the Ismā'īlīs had a tradition of posing as adherents of the faith within which they worked. They worked both among the Sunnis and the non-Muslims. There are several instances on record where an Ismā'īlī missionary posed as a Brahmin or a Hindu priest and instead of flatly contradicting the doctrines of the faith he sought to subvert, he accepted its basic assumptions and introduced some of Ismā'īlī beliefs in a disguised form and thus slowly and gradually paved the way for total conversion. Lack of total adherence has never worried the Ismā'īlīs, because they are fully confident that the convert will ultimately accept the faith fully. This kind of conversion is achieved in a peculiar manner. In the beginning, the appeal is not on the basis of dogma or beliefs, but an attempt is made to convince the potential convert of the spiritual greatness of some person. In the early days, the missionary himself was a man of exemplary character. Very often 'Alī was depicted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu among the Vaiṣṇavites. In short, after some personal loyalty had been created, the disciple was taken through various stages into full-fledged belief in the teachings of Ismā'īlī

⁵¹ Two of these were famous in the entire Arab world: Abu Ma'shar Najīb, as a biographer of the Prophet, and Abu-'l-'Atā, the poet (Nadwī, Saiyid Sulaimān, *'Arab wa Hind ke ta'alluqāt*, p. 303).



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Islam. The Ismā'ilis were here at an advantage compared to the Sunnis, because the latter insist upon total conversion right from the beginning and are not willing to make the least compromise in the matter of doctrine. A change in the name of the convert also became common. The reason for this, in the beginning, was that the pagan names among the converts were often offensive to Muslim ideas of monotheism. Later, however, a change of name became almost obligatory in the popular mind. The justification has been that the convert is thus weaned away totally from his associations with the past which are rooted in a religious tradition. The Ismā'ili technique has been different. The inspiration has come from their insistence upon certain esoteric meanings of all exoteric institutions of religion. Because they could expand their influence even in the world of Islam only by continuous propaganda, they were experts in the propagation of their views.

It is not unlikely that among those who ultimately overthrew the rule of the Sunni amirs, there must have been some who had been converted from amongst the non-Muslim population. The subsequent history of Sind makes it probable that the Ismā'ilis had achieved considerable success in winning converts from Buddhism and Hinduism. Take for instance the Sumrās, who established their rule over considerable areas of Sind and maintained it for more than three centuries.⁵² Some writers have considered them to be Hindus; this opinion is based upon the fact that some of them had Hindu names. However, in a letter included in the Druz scriptures and addressed to "the monotheists of Multan and India in general and Shaiikh Ibn Sumrā Rāja Pāl in particular" there is an appeal that the Ismā'ilis should rise against the Ghaznawids in the interests of the Ismā'ili faith.⁵³ This appeal was made in the year 1031 and within twenty years the Sumrās had established their rule in Sind. Now two conclusions emerge clearly from this. The Sumrās were Ismā'ilis and they some-

⁵² For a list of the Sumrā rulers see Nadwī, Saiyid Sulaimān, '*Arab wa Hind ke ta'alluqāt*', p. 371, where it has been quoted from 'Qāni', pp. 263b ff.

⁵³ Nadwī, Saiyid Sulaiman, '*Arab wa Hind ke ta'alluqāt*', pp. 352, 353; Elliot and Dowson, *Supplement*, I, p. 491.



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times bore Hindu names. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah says that the Sumrās had settled down in Sind at the time of the Arab conquest and were Arabs in origin.⁵⁴ The *Tārīkh-i-Ṭāhīrī* says that the Sumrās were a Hindu clan and were adherents of the Hindu faith.⁵⁵ We have seen that they were not Hindus by religion. The Ismā'īlīs call themselves monotheists because they think that the Sunnis make the attributes of God His associates, whereas they believe that a denial of attributes is true monotheism. The Sumrā chief is included among the "monotheists" in the Druz epistle. The Sumrās, however, maintained some of their Hindu customs; for instance they did not interdine with any one who did not belong to their clan.⁵⁶ This would create a doubt about the Sumrās being Muslims in the minds of those who were not familiar with the Ismā'īlī technique. The legend of their Arab origin is repeated by *Tuḥfat-u'l-kirām*, but this is a later work and its source of information may be the same legend as inspired Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's statement.⁵⁷ Some scholars have drawn the conclusion that the Sumrās were of mixed Arab and Hindu stock. Whereas this cannot be ruled out, it would hardly justify their Hindu names and customs. The tradition of an Arab origin may have arisen from the close association of some Ismā'īlī missionary, Arab by race, who identified himself so completely with the clan that he was accepted as one of them. He may, as the tradition says, have intermarried with them; but the clan must have been overwhelmingly Hindu in origin and as such retained its customs and some of its taboos. The main addressee of the Druz letter was a religious leader because he has been addressed as *shaikh*, a title which in Ismā'īlī parlance signified his status. His Hindu name signifies his original affiliations, especially because he is called a raja.

Later the Sumrās were gradually converted to the Sunni sect. This is borne out by the Ismā'īlī tradition that when the Ismā'īlīs of the Panjab started getting converted to Sunnism

⁵⁴ Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, III, pp. 101 ff.

⁵⁵ Elliot and Dowson, I, pp. 260, 484.

⁵⁶ Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, pp. 101 ff.

⁵⁷ Elliot and Dowson, I, p. 343.



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in large numbers, the Ismā'ili imam sent a Sindhi named Dā'ud or Dādū as a missionary, but he was expelled from Sind by the Sumrās and took refuge in Kathiawar.⁵⁸ There is another tradition that a Sumrā governor of Uch became a disciple of the saint, Saiyid Jalāl Bukhārī.⁵⁹ In any case, the process of the absorption of the Ismā'ilis into orthodox Sunni Islam had started and seemed to have made considerable headway before the end of the domination of the Sumrās.

The Ismā'ili missionaries, however, continued to work; indeed their activities never came to an end. We hear again and again of these missionaries; in spite of conversions from among them to the orthodox Sunni sect, there are still well-organized and thriving communities of Ismā'ilis in various townships of the Subcontinent. Some names stand out in the history of Ismā'ili missionary work in the Subcontinent. One of these was Nūr Satgurū, the last word being Hindi, meaning "the true teacher". This appellation was obviously adopted to attract the Hindus.⁶⁰ Was he the same person as Nūr Turk who tried to establish Ismā'ili supremacy at Delhi in the reign of Sultānah Raḍiyah through a *coup d'état*?⁶¹ Another missionary of note was Shams Sabzwārī, who has a tomb in Multan.⁶² He is said to have died in 1165. Pir Ṣadr-u'd-dīn who lies buried in Bahawalpur State defined anew the doctrines to be preached to the Hindus. He had close connections with them; the chief organizers of the Ismā'ili communities in the Panjab, Sind and Kashmir were respectively Seth Shām Dās, Trikām and Seth Tulsī Dās, all bearing Hindu names and enjoying the title of *mukhī*, a Hindi word meaning a chief. Even today the followers of the Aga Khan have the office of *mukhts* for certain areas. Ṣadr-u'd-dīn wrote a book in which he called the Prophet of Islam the avatār or incarnation of Brahmā, Adam of Shiva and 'Alī of Vishnū.⁶³

⁵⁸ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, IX, part II, p. 46.

⁵⁹ *Firishṭah*, II, p. 416.

⁶⁰ Lutfullah, Fazlullah, in *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, IX, part II, p. 38.

⁶¹ Al-Juzjānī, pp. 189, 190. Raḍiyah ruled from 1236 to 1240.

⁶² Ikrām, *Ab-i-Kawthar*, pp. 387, 388.

⁶³ Nanjiani, p. 208; also, Frere, Sir Bartle, "The Khojas, the Disciples of the Old Man of the Mountain", *Macmillan's Magazine*, XXXIV (London, 1876), pp. 431, 433, 434.



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Well might orthodoxy throw up its hands in despair! Pir Ṣadr-u'd-dīn had five sons, all of whom devoted their lives to missionary work; of these Tāj-u'd-dīn is highly venerated among the Ismā'ilīs of Sind, but the most famous was Kabīr-u'd-dīn who had remarkable success in converting the Hindus.⁶⁴ He died in 1490. The curious fact is that many of these Ismā'ilī missionaries were well thought of by the Sufis. No less a person than Nizām-u'd-dīn Awliyā spoke well of Nūr Turk⁶⁵ and Shaiḵh 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq of Delhi, himself a pillar of orthodoxy, had the highest praise for Kabīr-u'd-dīn.⁶⁶ The explanation may lie in the secret manner in which some of these missionaries went about their business. They must have avoided any possibility of earning a bad name for themselves, because they were now working in a Sunni land with power in the hands of the supporters of orthodoxy.

Without the availability of more data it is impossible to assess the part played by the Ismā'ilīs in the propagation of Islam in the Subcontinent, but there can be no doubt that they were always active. As any overt attempt to subvert the faith of those who were already Muslims would have drawn upon them the wrath of the orthodox, they considered it safer to win their converts, after the establishment of the political supremacy of the Sunnis, from among the Hindus, some of whom ultimately drifted into Sunnism. Ismā'ilī activities were mostly concentrated in Sind and Gujrat. In Sind they had succeeded in building up political power. For instance, the Sumrās brought to nought the endeavours of the Ghaznawids to root out Ismā'ilī rule from Multan and Sind. Multan was finally lost to them when Mu'izz-u'd-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām conquered it. Only in the 14th century did the Sumrās turn Sunni; for most of the time they were doughty champions of the Ismā'ilī sect. Proximity to the sea made communications with Yemen, one of the seats of the Ismā'ilī doctrine, easier; earlier, the same was true about Egypt.

⁶⁴ Ikrām, *Āb-i-Kawthar*, pp. 393, 395.

⁶⁵ Sijzi, pp. 189, 199.

⁶⁶ 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, p. 213.



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The Ismā'ilis make but a small proportion of the Muslim population of West Pakistan and Kashmir. The majority of the Muslims are Sunnis; the Shi'ahs of all denominations are a minority. The Ithnā 'Asharis are late-comers into the field, because this group began to gain in importance after the rise of the Mughuls and their close contacts with Iran. The spread of Sunni Islam in this area, therefore, needs some explanation.

The Arabs who came to Sind as conquerors were Sunnis, the various emirates that succeeded in establishing themselves as independent states were Sunni, until they were subverted and seized by the Ismā'ilis. Sunni Islam, therefore, had a good start. There must have remained centres of Sunni activity even in areas under Ismā'ilī rule. The Ghaznawid conquest of the Panjab gave orthodoxy a seat for more vigorous activity. Political action on the part of the Ghaznawids achieved little in Multan and Sind; the establishment of Sunni rule in the Panjab by itself could not uproot the Ismā'ilī doctrine, because we find the Ismā'ilī missionaries active even when the Sultanate of Delhi had been well established. In many parts of Sind the extension of the authority of the Sultanate followed and did not precede the rise of Sunnism to power. Therefore, the agencies through which this change was brought about must have been non-political in nature. It was not within the power of the theologians to carry out a missionary movement of that type, because they were not equipped for it. Not that they were idle, but they were helpless against any adversary who employed his knowledge of psychology in a subversive manner. Conviction comes from suggestion, not from argument; Sunni theologians have devoted years of their lives to teaching and scholarship throughout the history of Islam; they have preached to large multitudes, but their direct contacts with the masses have been surprisingly few. Sunni Islam had only one weapon in its armoury that had any chance of success against such adepts in missionary work as the Ismā'ilis: the technique adopted by the Sufis, which resulted in the conversion of many Ismā'ilis to Sunni Islam.

It is not clear whether the Sammas, who uprooted the Sumrās, were Ismā'ilis or Hindus before their conversion.



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When they came into the limelight of history, they were mostly Sunnis, because Firish⁶⁷ says about them that they rose to power-with the help of "the Muslims" and that "most of their chiefs were Muslims".⁶⁷ Firish⁶⁷ would not say this about the Ismā'ilis, whom he refers to as heretics. If this conclusion is correct, it is an indication of the fact that orthodox Islam was once again in a position to lend its support in the struggle for power in Sind and that it had by now gained a dominant position. This is also borne out by the fact that in 1363, when Firūz Shāh invested Thattah, the Sammas were able to secure the intercession of the saint, Saiyid Jalāl-u'd-dīn Ḥusain Bukhārī.⁶⁸ It is most unlikely that the saint would travel all the way from Uch to Thatta to intercede for a ruler whom he considered to be an unbeliever or a heretic with such an upholder of orthodoxy as the sultan. The fact, however, remains that many of the Jāms, as the Samma rulers styled themselves, bore Hindu names. It is not easy to find an explanation for this; such a phenomenon can be easily understood regarding the Ismā'ilis; but it was unusual for Sunnism to tolerate Hindu names in the Subcontinent. Perhaps this attitude was a later development; after all, the Iranis and the Turks did continue with many of their old names; so long as a name was not definitely polytheistic in its implications the earlier Muslims did not object to it; even the names of many of the companions of the Prophet were pre-Islamic in origin. The same attitude may have been adopted in Sind regarding the converts. The change in the names of new entrants to Islam was the symbol of a double conversion in effect; in the Subcontinent, it was not only the acceptance of a new faith but also of a new culture.

With the coming of the Turks, the terms Turk and Muslim became synonymous in the parlance of the Hindus;⁶⁹ hence conversion to Islam became adoption of the convert by a

⁶⁷ Firish⁶⁷, II, p. 317. The earliest reference which I have come across about the Sammas is in Kufī, p. 220. They received Muḥammad bin Qāsim with music and dancing in accordance with their tribal custom.

⁶⁸ 'Afif, pp. 241, 242.

⁶⁹ Within living memory these words were used as synonyms in the whole of Northern India, mostly by the Hindus. Even the latest convert was referred to as Turk; indeed conversion was called "turning a Turk".



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well-defined society. The difference is not as subtle as it sounds. Islam does establish a Muslim community, which has its own organization and into which the convert enters at the time of his conversion. In other areas this had no racial implications; a pagan or a Christian Arab remained an Arab on his conversion to Islam, not so a Hindu, because the converted Hindu joined a society which was centred in a foreign nucleus. In course of time the foreign element became acclimatized, yet it remained different and separate. This phenomenon, which perhaps did not develop in early Sind, has caused a good deal of misunderstanding and confusion. This also explains the fact that the converts do not seem to have been completely cut off from their clan and tribe; otherwise a statement to the effect that "most of the chiefs of the Sammas were Muslims" would be meaningless. Later when groups were converted to Islam, the caste and tribal associations were severed. Today there are many Khattris, Jāts and others who, after their conversion to Islam at some remote date, have still retained their caste or tribal names, but who are never looked upon as members of the original clan or tribe. This is also true of the Kashmiris, where Muslims and Hindus often bear the same family names of a caste or tribal origin, without being related or having any close relationship with their erstwhile kinsmen.

It seems improbable that the Muslims, having brought the Sammas into power, would suffer non-Muslim members of the clan to become monarchs. Later because of the contacts with Delhi, the Sammas adopted Arabic titles; Khhair-u'd-dīn had lived long enough at Delhi to have been deeply affected by its traditions. It is significant, however, that Nizām-u'd-dīn Ninda and some others did not totally drop their Hindu names. Therefore it cannot be argued that because the first three or four Jāms had Hindu names, they were Hindus.⁷⁰

It is difficult to determine with any exactitude when sufi activities started in Sind. For the earlier period we are helped neither by record nor by legend and tradition. This perhaps points in one direction: the field was held mostly by the

⁷⁰ See lists of Samma rulers given by Firishṭah, II, p. 317 ff., and Bakkari, pp. 62-79; Qāni', ff. 267, 268.



Ismā'ilis and orthodoxy was not only on the defensive but fighting a losing battle. We do not even know if coercion played any part in Ismā'ili victories; at least patronage must have been withdrawn from those who did not fall in with the dominant group. Soon after the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate at Baghdad and even more severely after the establishment of the Fatimid caliphate at Cairo, there was practically a war of attrition between the Ismā'ilis and the Sunnis resulting in great intolerance. In particular the activities of the Assassins, whose order was founded in 1090 or thereabouts, created considerable hostility between the orthodox and the Ismā'ilis. Therefore, if coercion entered the policies of Ismā'ili governments in Sind, it would be in accordance with the feelings prevailing at that time, because this was not only a struggle between two doctrines or schools of thought, but it had also deep political implications; the existence of Sunni propaganda, furthermore would not be tolerated because it would invariably result, if successful, in the subversion of the State as organized at that time. That may explain the absence of record and tradition of Sunni effort for the period of Ismā'ili rule.

There must, however, have existed cells of Sunni propaganda throughout, however weak and ineffective. With the growth of Sunni power in the neighbouring Panjab and Gujrat, these must have grown stronger. This is how a silent revolution seems to have overtaken the Sumrās and more effectively the Sammas. One of the earliest men definitely known to have interested himself in missionary work in Sind was the saint Bahā-u'd-dīn Zakāriyā, who was born in a small township near Multan.⁷¹ He was educated in Khurāsān where he went as a child. After visiting the holy places in Hijāz and completing his formal education, he went to Baghdad, where he became a member of the Suhrawardī brotherhood of the Sufis, having been enrolled and initiated by the famous Shaikh Shihāb-u'd-dīn. He was sent to Multan by his preceptor. Here he started his missionary activities. Multan was at this time under Qubāchah, one of Mu'izz-u'd-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām's slaves and generals. The Ismā'ilis had been uprooted by the sultan; the

⁷¹ Jamālī, I, pp. 17 ff.; 'Abd-u'r-Raḥmān, *Bazm-i-ṣūfiyah*, pp. 89-105, 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 25-28.



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saint had a great deal to do with reconverting Ismā'īlīs to Sunnism in Multan. He was successful both among Muslims and Hindus. He also extended his activities slowly into Sind. He was succeeded by his son Ṣadr-u'd-dīn on his death in 1264.⁷² Ṣadr-u'd-dīn was followed by his son Rukn-u'd-dīn, better known as Rukn-i-'ālam, on the former's death in 1285.⁷³ Rukn-i-'ālam died in 1334. Thus for about a century three generations of the same family devoted themselves to missionary activities in the area of Multan and Sind.

There was no difficulty so far as Multan was concerned, but we do not know of the technique adopted for Sind. We only read that in the beginning large numbers of people came from Sind and became the disciples of Shaiḫ Bahā-u'd-dīn Zakāriyā. This probably means that there were men devoted to Sufism and missionary work in Sind, who sought instruction from him. It is not improbable that they represented the cells of Sunni propaganda; it is also likely that new cells were created. This view is confirmed by the fact that even before the establishment of Bahā-u'd-dīn Zakāriyā at Multan, a Sufi of the same order, Shaiḫ Nūḥ of Bhakkar, had been deputed by the former's preceptor, Shaiḫ Shihāb-u'd-dīn, to Sind. He does not seem to have come into prominence because probably that was the time for silent and perhaps underground work.⁷⁴ We also read of the activities of another branch of the Suhrawardī *silsilah* which was established at Uch. Saiyid Jalāl-u'd-dīn Bukhārī, who was a disciple of Shaiḫ Bahā-u'd-dīn Zakāriyā, settled down at Uch in 1244. He was so successful here that the Hindu ruler, who had grown suspicious of his growing power and wanted to turn him out, lost his throne and Uch became a centre for the propagation of Islam; to this branch of the Suhrawardīs belonged Saiyid Jalāl Bukhārī, who is commonly known as Makhdūm Jahāniyān Jahān Gasht because of his prolonged travels and who interceded for the Sammas with Firūz Shāh.⁷⁵

⁷² 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 61-63; 'Abd-u'r-Raḥmān, *Bazm-i-ṣūfiyah*, pp. 106-119.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-277; Jamālī, II, pp. 1 ff.; 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 63-68. The family was held in high respect ('Afif, pp. 514-516).

⁷⁴ Ikram, *Ab-i-Kawthar*, pp. 330-331.

⁷⁵ 'Abd-u'r-Raḥmān, *Bazm-i-ṣūfiyah*, pp. 394-440.



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The situation seems to have changed in course of time because **Makhdūm Lāl Shāhbāz Qalandar**, whose shrine at Sehwan is highly respected, was sent there openly.⁷⁶ The Samma ruler Ninda's reign was known not only for peace and prosperity but also for the progress of Islam. A descendant of **Shāikh 'Abd-u'l-Qādir Jilānī**, **Saiyid Yūsuf-u'd-dīn**, came to Sind, because he was bidden in a dream to undertake missionary work in this area. He arrived in 1422 and after working patiently for ten years he succeeded in converting seven hundred families of the Lohāna caste.⁷⁷ A branch of this group later migrated to Cutch where they made more converts.⁷⁸ Later there was such expansion of Sufi activities in Sind that the area is full of the descendants of the Sufis who, at one time or another, earned the respect of the population.

When did Sind come to have a majority of Sunni Muslims? In the absence of statistics before the institution of periodical censuses it would be impossible even to make a reasonable guess. There are some who are of the opinion that this has happened in the course of the last two or three centuries. In 1699 Captain Alexander Hamilton found the Hindus ten times as numerous as the Muslims in Thatta.⁷⁹ The impressions of travellers are not safe guides in the matter of statistics, but even if it be granted that the Muslims were far outnumbered by the Hindus in the commercial town of Thatta, it would be erroneous to jump to any conclusions about the composition of the population in the whole of Sind; because right up to the time of the establishment of Pakistan, the Hindu population was concentrated in the bigger townships. Karachi, the capital, had actually a majority of non-Muslim population, even though Sind had a strong Muslim majority. Muslim missionary activity lost its vitality during the last century. It seems more likely that Islam established a lead over Hinduism long before. This does not mean that there have been no conversions for a long time; but to ascribe the Muslim

⁷⁶ Bilgrāmī, **Mīr Ghulām 'Alī Azād**, pp. 285-286; **Ikrām, 'Ab-i-Kawthar**, pp. 330-33; **Burton**, II, pp. 185-189, has a picturesque description of the shrine.

⁷⁷ **Arnold**, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 274.

⁷⁸ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, I, p. 93.

⁷⁹ *Gazetteer of the Province of Sind*, Volume A, p. 117.



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majority to the policies of the Kalhorās and Tālpurs is a mistake.⁸⁰ These states were not so well organized as to be able to convert their subjects either through coercion or discrimination. Actually conversion by neither means can be established, because the 'Āmils continued to occupy high administrative posts without conversion to Islam. The long history of Islam in Sind shows that the missionary activities of the Muslims had been extensively successful and the tradition did not die out completely until quite recently. The Muslim majority in Sind was the reward of strenuous efforts by Muslim missionaries over a period of nearly twelve centuries.

In the course of this discussion we have seen that Multan and Uch became centres of missionary activity. In the beginning of the tenth century, Lahore, where the Ghaznawids had established their rule, became another centre. It grew into a seat of Islamic culture and came to be counted among the famous cities of Islam. This drew to it not only poets and literati, but also mystics and religious teachers. One of these was Shaikh Ismā'il, who came to Lahore even before a Muslim governor had been appointed by Maḥmūd of Ghazni.⁸¹ It is said about him that he was so successful as a missionary that thousands embraced Islam as the result of his preachings. On a single Friday a thousand persons accepted Islam and he was able to carry conviction to hundreds of hearts almost every day. A famous name connected with Lahore is that of Shaikh 'Alī bin 'Uṭmān Hujwīrī. He is known today mostly for his famous book, the *Kashf-u'l-mahjūb*, one of the earliest treatises on Sufism. Some of his other books are extant, but they are not so well known. One of his disciples was Saiyid Aḥmad, better known by the appellations of Sultan Sakhi Sarwar or Lakh Dātā. Right up to the establishment of Pakistan, he had many followers among the Hindus, which shows that he had worked among them. A class of Jāts was known as Sulṭānis after him until a decade ago.⁸²

Islam entered Kashmir fairly early. One Muḥammad 'Alafī,

⁸⁰ *Gazetteer of the Province of Sind*, V, pp. 116, 117.

⁸¹ Raḥmān 'Alī, p. 23; *Asadī-u'l-Hāshimī*, II, p. 230. The saint came to Lahore in 395 A.H. (1003 A.D.).

⁸² *Gazetteer of the Jullundur District*, p. 30; also, *Gazetteer of Ludhiana District*, p. 66.



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an Arab, had incurred the displeasure of Ḥajjāj and had taken service with Dāhir before Muḥammad bin Qāsim's expedition. With him he had brought a contingent of five hundred Arabs.⁸³ When asked by Dāhir to fight against Muḥammad bin Qāsim, he excused himself as he could not fight against Muslims because of a stern injunction of his religion to that effect. At this he was dismissed. Muḥammad bin Qāsim gave him amnesty and utilised him in weaning away some of the local chieftains to the Arab cause.⁸⁴ There is, however, another tradition which has been recorded by the same authority. When 'Alafī refused to fight against brother Muslims, Dāhir kept him on as an adviser.⁸⁵ When Dāhir was killed, 'Alafī remained attached to the next monarch, Jaisiyah, in the same capacity. However, when the prospects grew absolutely hopeless for Jaisiyah and he decided to seek shelter with some Hindu ruler, 'Alafī went to the ruler of Kashmir who received him with kindness and assigned him some territory. 'Alafī is said to have risen high in the service of the Raja of Kashmir. After his death Jahm bin Samah succeeded him. The *Chach-nāmah* adds that "his descendants are still well established; he built mosques; he rose to great dignity and the king of Kashmir treated him with great respect".⁸⁶ In view of the difficulty in identifying Shakilhar, where these Arabs had their assignment, it is impossible to say whether this was in the area of Kashmir proper. The second tradition is not improbable, because 'Alafī might well have been reluctant to go back into the service of such a stern ruler as Ḥajjāj; it is also possible that the Arab party split into two, one going to Muḥammad bin Qāsim and others to Kashmir.

Later, when Sultan Mas'ūd of Ghazni invaded Kashmir in 1033, there were Muslim traders resident in the kingdom.⁸⁷ In 1315 a Muslim of Swat, Shāh Mirzā, took service under Rāja Singh Deva.⁸⁸ Even before, some Muslims had conti-

⁸³ Kūfī, p. 70.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁸⁷ Firishtah, I, p. 41.

⁸⁸ Sufi, I, p. 118.



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nuously found employment under the Hindu rulers of Kashmir. Shāh Mirzā obtained great power, and later, under a subsequent ruler, he began to wield the supreme authority. Gradually he became the monarch and assumed the title of Shams-u'd-dīn Shāh. He was a good ruler and organised his government on wise principles, thus giving relief to the people and the cultivators, whereas the previous rule had been oppressive.⁸⁹ A Sufi belonging to the Suhrawardī *silsilah*, Sharaf-u'd-dīn by name and popularly known as Bulbul Shāh, came to Kashmir in 1324 when Shāh Mirzā was still an officer and the ruler was Ranjan Deva, and converted the latter and many others. The ruler adopted the title of Ṣadr-u'd-dīn and ruled for another two and a half years.⁹⁰ It is likely that the troubles after his death were due to the struggle between converts to Islam and those who resented their supremacy. In 1369 there came to Kashmir Amīr Kabīr Saiyid 'Alī Hamdānī with seven hundred Saiyids in his entourage who devoted themselves to missionary work with great zeal and converted large numbers to Islam.⁹¹ The success of these missionary efforts can be gauged from the reports that Bulbul Shāh converted no less than ten thousand persons⁹² and Saiyid Hamdānī's efforts brought thirty-seven thousand into the fold of Islam.⁹³ The latter left Kashmir, but some members of his mission remained behind and continued the work. The mission had been well planned and the saint had first sent a trusted lieutenant, Mīr Saiyid Ḥusain Simnānī, who stayed behind and lies buried in Kashmir.⁹⁴ Later Saiyid 'Alī Hamdānī's son, Mīr Muḥammad Hamdānī, came to Kashmir and worked there for one or two decades. During this time the monarch was Sulṭān Sikandar, who is remembered as "the iconoclast". His minister, Sinha Bhatta, had been newly converted to Islam and had the convert's proverbial zeal which expressed itself in intolerance. He abolished customs which looked

⁸⁹ *Cambridge History of India*, III, p. 277.

⁹⁰ Sufi, pp. 123 ff. Sufi gives the name of the monarch as Rinchana; Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 292.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; Asadī-u'l-Hāshimī, II, pp. 293-294.

⁹² Sa'adat, p. 23.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ Asadī-u'l-Hāshimī, II, p. 296.



repugnant to him such as burning widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands, but he did not stop there and was responsible for the demolition of a number of temples,⁹⁵ following the same policy under the next monarch. Then, in 1423, Sulṭān Zain-u'l-'ābidīn seized the throne.⁹⁶ This monarch is generally called the Akbar of Kashmir. He abolished *jizyah*, prohibited the slaughter of cows and again permitted the burning of widows. Those Hindus who had accepted Islam for political reasons in the previous two reigns were permitted to revert to their old religion and many took advantage of the permission. This reign is also noted for its cultural achievements and enlightened government.

The missionary activities, however, did not come to an end and a group of native saintly preachers grew up who succeeded in winning the respect of the non-Muslim population.⁹⁷ They were called *ṛṣis*, the Sanskrit word for a seer and a saint. In 1487 the Nur Bakhshī sect of the Ismā'īlīs extended their activities into Kashmir and converted the ruling family to its tenets.⁹⁸ They were active among the Hindus as well and converted many to the Ismā'īlī form of Islam. Even before this Ismā'īlī missionaries sent from Alamut had been active.⁹⁹ In 1586 Kashmir was conquered by Akbar and annexed to the Mughul Empire.¹⁰⁰ The association with an empire which prided itself on its cultural eminence strengthened the influence of Islam in that area, because it was visited by competent scholars and theologians. In the reign of 'Alamgīr I a Sufi named Saiyid Shāh Farīd-u'd-dīn converted the Hindu rāja of Kishtwar and achieved even greater success among the populace, who accepted Islam in large numbers.¹⁰¹ Islam had also been firmly established for some time in Ladakh and Baltistan; though it is not known when Islamic missionary

⁹⁵ Firishṭah, II, pp. 341-342. For Saiyid Muḥammad Hamdānī, see Sufi, pp. 92-94.

⁹⁶ Sufi, pp. 156, 157.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-102.

⁹⁸ Shafī', K. B. Muḥammad, article in *Oriental College Magazine*, Lahore, Febr. and May 1925; Firishṭah, II, pp. 336-337; Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 292.

⁹⁹ Nanjiani, p. 141.

¹⁰⁰ *Cambridge History of India*, III, pp. 292, 293.

¹⁰¹ Dew, *The Jammu and Kashmir Territories*, (London 1974), pp. 58, 155.



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effort began there, nor is there any tradition regarding the first Muslim missionaries. Baltistan has a tradition that four brothers from Khurāsān "revived" the faith.¹⁰² This might mean that there was an interlude of conversion to the Ismā'īlī sect. In the middle of the last century Islam was still making headway in the area when the policies pursued by the Hindu rāja of Kashmir created difficulties in the way of Muslim missionary effort.¹⁰³ However, in spite of such policies, Islam was the religion of the vast majority of the State of Jammu and Kashmir before its occupation by Indian troops in 1947.

The history of the expansion of Islam in the mountainous region to the west of the river Indus is extremely obscure. The conversion of Baluchistan started earlier than the Arab invasion of Sind, because areas like Makran were on the border of the lands of Islam which in all probability had been penetrating slowly in these regions. When Ibn Hawqal visited Makran, it was under an Arab ruler.¹⁰⁴ Near Makran was the independent state of Mushkī, whose territories could be traversed in three days. Was this modern Nushki in Pakistani Baluchistan?¹⁰⁵ A ruler of Kabul was converted to Islam in the ninth century, a hundred years before the rise of the Ghaznawids.¹⁰⁶ The Afghan traditions speak of conversion by peaceful persuasion; for instance the Khulāṣat-u'l-ansāb speaks of a deputation being sent to Arabia to collect information about the Prophet's mission, on whose return and testimony many Afghans embraced Islam.¹⁰⁷ It is obvious that such a deputation could have been sent only if some one had created an inclination in the minds of the leaders. It was not until the struggle between Sabuktigīn and the Hindu Shāhī dynasty which held sway in the territories of considerable portions of modern Afghanistan, Peshawar and Panjab, that the Hindu political domination in this area was chal-

¹⁰² Dew, *The Jammu and Kashmir Territories*, (London, 1941), p. 359.

¹⁰³ Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 293.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Hawqal, p. 323.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233. مشکی can also be read Mashakī instead of Mushkī. Mashakī is about thirty miles south of Ghazni (Caroe, p. 169). This would rule it out. Nushkī is near Makran.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Balādhurī, p. 402.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Battūṭah (Urdu translation), I, p. 555 fn., quoting Ibn Shāh-i-Ālam Khulāṣat-u'l-anṣab.



lenged. In the sphere of religion, many Afghan tribes and sections of the rural population were non-Muslim and were being only gradually converted to Islam.¹⁰⁸ The establishment of Muslim rule in these areas did not result in immediate or total conversion of the populace; even under Maḥmūd of Ghazni the Afghans were not all Muslims, these being mainly concentrated in the cities and towns whereas the countryside and outlying districts contained many non-Muslims.¹⁰⁹ The Ghakkars and the Khokhars were converted to Islam later and gradually.¹¹⁰ Amīr Kabīr Saiyid 'Alī Ḥamdānī, after his departure from Kashmir, went into Kafiristan and the Hazara area for missionary work and died there in 1384.¹¹¹ Similarly his son, Mīr Muḥammad Ḥamdānī, on coming back from the ḥajj, went to the same area, where he also died.¹¹² It is thus obvious that the Kubrawiyah branch of the Suhrawardīs, to which these two saints belonged, was as much interested in this area as it was in Kashmir, and if their success in Kashmir is any indication, Islam must have prospered as the result of their activities which, in all probability, produced many conversions and some quickening of religious consciousness.¹¹³ However, pagan and non-Muslim communities continued to exist in this area and the Kafirs are today a testimony to the fact that succeeding governments did not exercise any pressure on the local population.

There were, however, Muslim communities in existence in all this area before the establishment of Muslim rule. When the Hindu Shāhī dynasty had to shift its capital from Kabul, it fixed upon Waihind near modern Peshawar as the seat of its government. We read of a community of Muslim traders in that city before its capture by Maḥmūd of Ghazni.¹¹⁴ It even

¹⁰⁸ Ibn-u'l-Aṭhīr, VIII, pp. 272, 273. The area was called Lāmghān and was in Hindu hands.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, IX, p. 128.

¹¹⁰ The Ghakkars accepted Islam in the thirteenth century (Firishṭah, I, pp. 59, 60).

¹¹¹ Sufi, I, p. 87.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, I, p. 94.

¹¹³ The Kubrawiyya *silsilah* was a branch of the Suhrawardī *silsilah* and was founded by Shāikh Najm-u'd-dīn Kubrā who died in 1221 A.D. (*ibid.*, I, p. 89).

¹¹⁴ Muqaddasī, p. 485.



had a separate amir for the Muslims which denotes a measure of autonomy. Similarly Balādhuri has mentioned a city called 'Asifān, which he says was equidistant from Kabul, Multan and Kashmir.¹¹⁵ This description of its location does not justify a modern conjecture that it was Sehwan, which is south of Multan and not in the direction of Kashmir or Kabul.¹¹⁶ The Arab geographers describe other cities and states which like 'Asifān contained Muslim communities. A Muslim state of Tūrān has been mentioned;¹¹⁷ of this the capital city was Quzdar.¹¹⁸ It has been described as a thriving centre of commerce and a meeting place of traders from Khurāsān, Iran and India.¹¹⁹ Some modern writers are of the opinion that it was situated between modern Afghanistan and the Indus; the description of the situation would rather justify the opinion that Quzdar was in Baluchistan. Yet another Muslim state finds mention about which very little is known; it has been called Būqān.¹²⁰ These statements justify one conclusion: that there were Muslim communities scattered in the mountainous region on the west of the Indus. In view of the paucity of material it is difficult to affirm definitely where some of these communities were located, but in some places they seem to have been important enough to be accorded a certain amount of autonomy, in others they were engaged in interregional commerce, and in some areas they had even established independent states. Some parts of modern Afghanistan have been included in this discussion because the people on the two sides of the Pakistan frontier are homogeneous and have common traditions and history. The Ismā'īlī doctrine penetrated into the extreme north-west, so that the people of Hunza in Pakistan are still Ismā'ilīs.

In the course of centuries Islam became the dominant religion of the areas now constituting West Pakistan and the

¹¹⁵ Al-Balādhuri, p. 446.

¹¹⁶ Nadwī, Saiyid Sulaimān, *'Arab wa Hind ke ta'alluqāt*, p. 392.

¹¹⁷ Muqaddasī, p. 478. Iṣṭakhrī (p. 88) says Tūrān was green and fertile. Also, Ibn Ḥawqal, p. 232.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Muqaddasī, p. 478. It was probably modern Khuzdar in Baluchistan.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Al-Balādhuri, pp. 434, 435.



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territories adjacent to it. This was achieved by the patient endeavours of the Muslim missionaries. In this region the Ithnā 'Asharī school has been a late-comer, though it claims a fair following. The main influx came with the rise of the Mughul Empire, which for various reasons encouraged the immigration of Ithnā 'Asharī Shī'ah officials and others from Safawid Iran. Scattered in this population are a fair number of the descendants of such Muslims as migrated from time to time.

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III

Islam Spreads into Other Areas

Gujrat came into contact with Islam as early as South India, because it had the same traditions of maritime trade with the Persians and the Arabs. Actually its contacts with Iran were at one time even closer, not only because of geographical proximity, but also because portions of it had been under Persian rule as early as the end of the sixth century before Christ.¹ Arab settlements in Gujrat, therefore, preceded the mission of the Prophet; this conclusion can be substantiated by the fact that the head of the Arab community in some settlements was known by the title of *hunarman*, an Arab corruption of the Persian word *hunarmand*.² Indeed the Persian tradition of looking upon Gujrat as a part of Sind because it had been included in the Persian satrapy of Hind, at that time a synonym of Sind, was alive when Ibn Khurdādhbih wrote his *Al-masālik wa'l-mamālik* in the middle of the ninth century, because all the settlements of Gujrat are placed in Sind by that author.³ One of the earliest eye-witness Arab accounts of this area which has reached us is the *Silsilat-u't-tawārikh* of Sulaimān, who wrote about a couple of decades

¹ *Columbia Encyclopedia*, article on Persia.

² See *supra*, Chapter I, note 11; also, Buzurg bin Shāhryār, p. 144.

³ The book was written in *circa* 864.

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earlier than Ibn Khurdādhbih. He was a trader and had travelled between China and Iraq in connection with his business.⁴ He mentions Arab settlements in Gujrat and praises Balhāra, the Valabhī ruler of the area, very highly. He says that the king treated the Arabs exceedingly well and that they were also popular with the people.⁵ The same impression is conveyed by Buzurg bin Shāhryār as well as Mas'ūdī. The latter speaks of a growing population, so far as the Muslims were concerned. In Šimūr alone, there were ten thousand Muslims.⁶ Some of these were the progeny of Arab fathers who had married Hindu women. Shāhryār mentions that he found among the richer merchants an Indian convert to Islam.⁷ Other writers also speak of the prosperity of the Muslim settlements, their mosques and religious freedom, and the sympathetic attitude of the native rulers. The impression left by their writings is of an expanding Muslim community, growing more numerous through immigration, marriages with native women and conversion.

There is no evidence regarding organized missionary activity; in all probability the Muslim traders and their theologians did some missionary work. It is difficult to assess its extent or success. Perhaps it was meagre because, whereas Mas'ūdī mentions a section of the Muslim community consisting of those who were born in India,⁸ he does not say whether this section also included converts from local faiths. Nor does he make it clear whether he includes in this description children of pure Arab parentage born locally. Perhaps he includes only the offspring of mixed parentage and the local converts. In any case such a distinction could arise only if the number of Muslims of native and mixed parentage was sufficiently large.

Al-'Awfī mentions an incident which shows that occasionally there was some outbreak of fanaticism against the Muslims.⁹

⁴ The book was written in *circa* 851.

⁵ Sulaimān, pp. 26, 27.

⁶ Mas'ūdī, II, pp. 85, 86.

⁷ Buzurg bin Shāhryār, p. 16.

⁸ Mas'ūdī, II, pp. 85, 86.

⁹ Al-'Awfī, Chapter II, f., 85 a.



In the reign of Rāja Janak the Parsis incited the Hindus against a Muslim settlement situated in Cambay. They demolished the minaret of the mosque and killed eighty Muslims. The Parsis at the time could not have been too pleased with the Muslims because of the conquest of their historical land by the Arabs and the decay of the Zoroastrian faith. They might have suggested to the Hindus that the Arabs were a dangerous people who could ultimately conquer Gujrat as well and subvert the Hindu faith. Mere promptings do not result in such outbursts; it is not unlikely that the Hindu ire was the result of the success of some Muslim missionary effort, which would add force to the Parsi argument. The complaints of the imam of the mosque, who somehow escaped, produced no effect until he was able to approach the monarch with a subterfuge. The rāja made personal inquiries and was convinced of the truth of the imam's complaint and redressed the grievance by giving the Muslims money to repair the mosque and punishing the culprits. This throws some light not only upon the rāja's sense of justice but also on the recognition by the ruler of the necessity of protecting the Muslim traders in the interests of the state. Such protection made it possible for the Muslims to carry on missionary activities.

The Ismā'īlīs seem soon to have become interested in missionary work in the area. The first tradition regarding their earliest efforts in the interior may have been embellished by later narrators, but in essence it seems to be true because it is so characteristic both of Ismā'īlī enthusiasm for missionary work and of their technique. It is said that an Ismā'īlī Bohrah missionary was sent from Yemen to work in Gujrat.¹⁰ He is called 'Abd-u'llah in some traditions and Muḥammad in others. In view of several contradictory traditions it is difficult to be certain about his real name. He reached Cambay and then went to Anhilwara Patan, commonly called Patan by Muslim writers. He disguised himself as a Brahmin and became a domestic servant of the monarch, Siddha Rāja, who, however, discovered his stratagem, and, on cross examination, 'Abd-u'llah had to confess the truth. One tradition

¹⁰ Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 275; Ḥasan, II, p. 86.



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says that the ruler decided to burn him alive but that the missionary died before this could be done. His dead body turned into a heap of flowers. Perhaps he had accomplices who removed him or his dead body and put flowers instead. There is another tradition which says that he succeeded in converting the ruler and his chief minister, but that they, in accordance with Ismā'īlī practice in such circumstances, did not profess Islam openly; that when the rāja died in 1143, it was given out that his corpse had turned into flowers, but he was in fact buried secretly in accordance with Ismā'īlī rites.¹¹ The persistence of a tradition like this and its mention in Bohra books suggests that it possesses an element of truth, which seems to be that there was a secret effort to convert the ruler to the Ismā'īlī faith. The story in the *Majālis-u'l-mu'minīn* about this incident is a little more convincing.¹² It gives the name of the missionary as Mulla 'Alī; he found an influential Brahmin who had many disciples, including the chief minister. The mulla disguised himself as a Hindu and became a disciple of the Brahmin and gradually converted him to Islam. Through the Brahmin's influence the chief minister also became a Muslim. The ruler once paid a visit to the minister and caught him in the act of praying. He questioned the minister and this led to his secret conversion. It seems that Mullā 'Alī, 'Abd-u'llah, and Muḥammad are different names for the same person, which is not impossible because the contingencies of secret missionary work required changes in name to hide the true identity of the worker. There is another, though a more remote, possibility of wandering tales being ascribed to different persons by credulous believers. This is less likely in this instance because the Bohrahs claim 'Abd-u'llah and Mullā 'Alī as the founders of their community through large-scale conversions from Hinduism.

A Sunni missionary of note was Imām Shāh of Pirānā who converted many Hindus to Islam.¹³ The success achieved by

¹¹ Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 275; Ḥasan, II, p. 86

¹² Shustarī, f. 65.

¹³ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, IX, part II, pp. 66, 67. Pirānā is ten miles south-west of Ahmadabad.



Muslim missionaries in building up friendly relations with the Hindus can be gauged by the fact that many of them, like Imām Shāh, are revered in their localities by Hindus as well as Muslims. A very early missionary was Bābā Raiḥān who is revered widely around Broach. Very little is known about him. However, because this area had, until 1947, the largest percentage of Muslims in the rural population of all the districts in Bombay Presidency,¹⁴ and there is no record of other missionaries having been active there, it seems probable that Bābā Raiḥān converted quite a large number of the villagers to Islam. If the tradition that he came from Transoxiana and built a mosque and a *khānqāh* in 1038 is correct, he started his work before the establishment of Muslim rule. It is said that he succeeded in converting the son of the local ruler and many others.¹⁵ The ruler was so annoyed that he decided to punish his son and those who were responsible for his conversion. This led to war between the father and the son, in which the Muslims were worsted; the prince and many others lost their lives. However, the Muslims were not completely crushed and the rāja thought it fit to make peace with the saint and his followers. This would indicate a fairly strong Muslim community which could withstand the opposition of the ruler. If the date of the event is later than the tradition records, then the ruler might have had second thoughts after his victory because, had matters been pushed to the extremes, some neighbouring Muslim power might have found an excuse for intervention and conquest.

Among the Muslim sultans of Gujrat, the reign of Maḥmud Begarah (1458-1511) is noted for the missionary zeal of one of his nobles, Malik ‘Abd-u’l-Laṭīf, who persuaded many Hindus to become Muslims.¹⁶ He is remembered among the Muslim descendants of the Hindus whom he converted as Dāwal Shāh Pīr. The last word denotes that he was respected as a Sufi and found time for missionary effort in spite of his official

¹⁴ *Census Report of India, Bombay, III, Tables*, pp. 86-89. The Muslims formed 15.56% of the population. The percentage was, however, higher in some states and cities: Cutch (23%), Jaitpur (35.85%).

¹⁵ Forbes, II, pp. 252-254.

¹⁶ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, V*, p. 89; ‘Abd-u’l-Ḥaqq, p. 162; Ḥasan, II, p. 33.



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duties. Dāwal Shāh is derived from his official title, Dāwar-u'l-mulk. Many Muslim families of Cutch trace their conversion to his endeavours. The Nizāmī and Suhrawardī *silsilahs* attached great importance to Gujrat.¹⁷ Three important disciples of Shaikh Nizām-u'd-dīn of Delhi worked in this area, of whom perhaps Husām-u'd-dīn 'Uthmānī was the most successful.¹⁸ After having worked for forty-one years he died in the year 1433. The Suhrawardīs had greater influence in Gujrat because of the comparative proximity to Multan and Uch. Several Suhrawardī saints lie buried in Patan; it continued to remain a centre of Muslim religious activity and culture even after the transfer of the capital to Ahmadabad,¹⁹ which also achieved eminence. Broach, Rander and Cambay also continued to be centres of Islamic culture and learning. The activities of the sufis were responsible not only for the conversion of Hindus but also for the absorption of many Ismā'ilīs into Sunni Islam, especially the Bohrahs. When Sulṭān Muẓaffar I came to Gujrat in his capacity as governor, he brought with him a large number of Sunni 'ulamā who seem to have had considerable success in converting Ismā'ilīs to Sunnism.²⁰

It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that several Lohāna families were converted to Islam by Saiyid Yūsuf-u'd-dīn in Sind and that a section of these converts migrated to Cutch where they brought more of their fellow Lohānas into the fold of Islam. This formed the nucleus of the prosperous community of Muslim traders known as the Memons.²¹

There are contradictory traditions about the penetration of Islam into Rajputana. The author of *Siyār-u'l-awliyā* says that the famous saint Khwājah Mu'in-u'd-dīn Chishtī, who lies buried at Ajmer, reached the city while it was still under Hindu rule. The ruler did not like the Khwājah's missionary activities and put difficulties in his way.²² There seems to

¹⁷ Hasan, pp. 16 ff.

¹⁸ Mīr Khurd (see note 22) mentions him as Husām-u'd-dīn Multānī (pp. 257-262), 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 89-91.

¹⁹ Ikrām, *Ab-i-Kawthar*, p. 373.

²⁰ Shustarī, f. 65.

²¹ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, I, p. 93.

²² Mīr Khurd, pp. 46-47.



be an error here because the contemporary *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣiri* says that the saint accompanied the army of Sultān Mu'izz-u'd-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām and fought as a soldier.²³ Khwājah Mu'in-u'd-dīn Chishtī exercised great influence upon the subsequent history of Islam in the Subcontinent. He did make a number of converts as his biographers point out, but that was not his most outstanding contribution. Through him prospered the Chishtiyah *silsilah* of Sufis who played an important rôle as missionaries and in creating religious fervour among the Muslims. The khwājah had travelled widely in the Muslim world. It was mostly through men of learning who kept themselves in touch with the intellectual and religious developments in the rest of the Muslim world and through the Sufis that Islam maintained its cosmopolitan and international character. The tomb of Khwājah Mu'in-u'd-dīn Chishtī is one of the most revered shrines in the Subcontinent and throughout the centuries has drawn Muslim and Hindu pilgrims. He died in 1236. His two main disciples were Khwājah Quṭb-u'd-dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī, whose tomb is in Delhi and after whom is named the famous Quṭb Minār built by Quṭb-u'd-dīn Aibak in that city, and Shaikh Ḥāmid-u'd-dīn of Nagor.²⁴ Another famous saint of the same *silsilah* was Shaikh Nizām-u'd-dīn Awliyā of Delhi, who, throughout several reigns, carried on the work of spiritual reconstruction. One has only to read Baranī's account of the religious and moral regeneration brought about by his endeavours to be impressed with the quality of his achievement.²⁵ He was a disciple of Bābā Farīd who was the disciple of Khwājah Bakhtiyār Kākī.²⁶ Another saint who was Bābā Farīd's disciple was Shaikh 'Alī Ṣābir; through him was established the Ṣābiriyyah branch of the Chishtiyah *silsilah*. This branch also, like the Nizāmiyyah, established by Nizām-u'd-dīn, produced many Sufis of note.²⁷

²³ Al-Jūzjānī, p. 119.

²⁴ 'Abd-u'r-Rahmān, *Bazm-i-ṣūfiyyah*, has succinct biographies of these *shaikhs* (pp. 63-88); 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 25, 26.

²⁵ Baranī, pp. 345, 346; 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 55-60.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-54. Mīr Khurd, p. 96; Jamālī, p. 23; also, Nizāmī, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farīd-u'd-dīn Ganj Shakar*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.



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There is some evidence of the existence of Muslim communities in the area now covered by the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar before the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi. The Gāharwārs levied a tax called *Turushka-danda*, which could have been raised from the Muslims living in their dominions, a Hindu counterpart of the *jizyah*; it could also have been a cess to meet the expenses of defending the territories against the Turks.²⁸ The Arab accounts of the city of Qanauj display an intimate knowledge of the city, but, as has been already remarked above, this could have been derived from the Hindu traders who had trade dealings with Arab houses;²⁹ on the other hand visits by Arab traders and even small settlements were not entirely improbable. Some scholars believe that there was a Muslim community in Badā'un before the Muslim conquest. It is claimed that Raḍī-u'd-dīn Ḥasan Ṣaghānī, the famous author of *Mashāriq-u'l-anwār*, was born at Badā'un ten years before Mu'izz-u'd-dīn Muḥammad bin Sām started his campaign of conquest in the Subcontinent. It is also stated that the Muslims had other settlements in this area in which they had their mosques, *khānqāhs*, schools and colleges.³⁰ It is obvious that the Muslims in those days could not think of settling anywhere without religious and educational facilities. If Badā'un could produce a scholar of Ṣaghānī's eminence, it must have possessed excellent facilities for higher education. It is, however, not certain that Ṣaghānī was born at Badā'un; indeed the evidence to the contrary is more weighty.³¹ The only authority that lends some support to Ṣaghānī's having been born at Badā'un is *Fawā'id-u'l-fuwād* in which Shaiḫ Nizām-u'd-dīn is reported to have said that Ṣaghānī was from that town.³² It is not certain that he was referring to the same Raḍī-u'd-dīn Ṣaghānī because some facts about the person mentioned in *Fawā'id-*

²⁸ Ghoshal, pp. 67-68.

²⁹ E.g., Abu-'l-Fidā, *Taqwīm-u'l-buldān*, p. 360.

³⁰ Nizāmī, *Tārīkh-i-mashā'ikh-i-Chisht*, pp. 143-144. Also, Diyā Aḥmad Badā'ūnī, "Allāmah Ṣaghānī kā Waṭan", and Khaliq Aḥmad Nizāmī, "Badā'ūn Islāmī Hind ke dawr-i-awwal men"; both these articles were published in the *Dhu-'l-Qarnain*, April 1956, Badā'ūn number.

³¹ The matter has been discussed at some length by 'Abd-u'r-Raḥmān in *Bazm-i-mamlūkīyah*, p. 29.

³² Sijzi, p. 103. The words are *az Badā'ūn būd*.



u'l-fuwād do not fit into the life of the author of *Mashāriq-u'l-anwār*. Bahraich in the eastern part of modern Uttar Pradesh has the tomb of Sālār Mas'ud Ghāzī, who preceded the establishment of Muslim rule; his grave, it is argued, could not have continued to exist without some Muslims in residence in the vicinity to look after it.³³ Here again the difficulty is that the hero is surrounded by legend and, in any case, there is no authentic account of the preservation of the grave during the preconquest period. In many parts of modern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar there are local traditions about the age of some graves which are assigned to the period before the establishment of Muslim rule.

More conclusive, however, is a positive statement by Ibn Athīr, who says of the army of the Rājā of Benares that "among his troops were a number of Muslim amirs, who had lived in these parts, their fathers and grandfathers, from the days of Sultān Maḥmūd bin Sabuktigīn, observing the shari'at of Islam, constant in their prayers and good deeds".³⁴ The silence of the *Tāj-u'l-ma'āthir* and *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣiri* regarding the existence of a Muslim community in this area can be explained only by their anxiety to conceal the fact that the local Muslims had sided with their rulers against the armies of Islam. Even this does not seem to provide a sufficiently strong reason for such an omission. However, the statement of Ibn Athīr cannot be dismissed lightly and no negative evidence can be given the same weight as a definite statement which has come so naturally that it rings true. This makes it probable that there did exist a few Muslim communities in this area before the Muslim conquest.

However, we know so little about them that it is impossible

³³ Mr. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami very kindly sent me some clarifications at my request, which have been taken into consideration in this discussion.

³⁴ Elliot and Dowson, II, p. 251. Elliot's translation, however, is incorrect. The correct translation is as given above. The text has:

ومن جملة عسكره عدة امراء مسلمين كانوا في تلك البلاد اب من جد من ايام السلطان محمود بن سبكتكين يلازمون شريعة الاسلام و يواظبون على الصلوة و افعال الخير
(Ibn-u'l-Athīr, part XII, p. 49).



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to reconstruct a cogent picture of their life and of the part they played in the life of the region. We have seen what influence was exerted by the small Muslim settlements in the South upon the religious thought of the period; there is no indication of a corresponding achievement by the pre-conquest communities of this area. The fruitful period in the life of the Muslim community begins historically only with the date of the establishment of Muslim rule in this region. In the wake of the conquest came soldiers, administrators, theologians, scholars, physicians, Sufis and craftsmen. This factor in the creation of a Muslim community will be discussed a little later. The conquest by itself did not lead to any mass conversions. It created an environment for missionary work but did not result directly in any great accessions from the native population to the ranks of the Muslims.

Here as well missionary activities were centred round the Sufi *silsilahs*. With the establishment of Muslim rule Khwājah Bakhtyār Kākī settled down at Delhi. He firmly laid the foundation of the Chishtī silsilah in that vicinity. Under Nizām-u'd-dīn Awliyā the *silsilah* prospered and sent its roots deep into the surrounding area and was even able to send missionaries into other regions. It is difficult to find out the extent of the success of this and other *silsilahs* in making conversions because the Sufis worked among the Muslims as well as others. As Nizām-u'd-dīn had his headquarters at Delhi, his own work was more or less centred upon the Muslim populace. It was among them and others who flocked to him from various places that he worked untiringly to create religious and moral consciousness of great intensity; from among his closer disciples missionaries were trained to fan out for the propagation of Islam. The creation of religious zeal in the Muslim population turned many an ordinary person into an enthusiastic missionary and led to its expanding, slowly yet steadily.

There are several communities in this region, though not as many as in West Pakistan or Kashmir and Bengal, which were converted to Islam from Hinduism. The Meos, who have given their name to Mewat, which is now divided among the Indian states of Rajasthan, Panjab and Uttar Pradesh. are



a warlike Muslim tribe, but originally they were Hindus.³⁵ It is difficult to fix the date of their conversion. In the beginning they gave considerable trouble to the sultans of Delhi, but ultimately Balban was able to suppress them in the 13th century. When in 1527 Bābur fought Rānā Sāngā at Fathpur Sikrī, Ḥasan Khān, a Mewātī chief, was in the Rājput camp. Bābur was annoyed at this because he had looked upon the fight against the Rājput chief as a holy war.³⁶ Bābur was right in this attitude because the Rājputs had been growing stronger with the weakening of Muslim authority in Malwa and the Sultanate of Delhi and if Bābur had been defeated at the hands of Rānā Sāngā, the Muslim political power would have received a serious setback. Bābur, therefore, calls Ḥasan Khān a renegade. It is obvious that, by the time of his invasion, the Meos had become Muslims.

There are several Muslim families who still remember their Rājput origin; a large number of them are orthodox Muslims. There were, however, right up to the end of British rule, communities of Muslim Rājputs who still observed many Hindu customs, sometimes called *Adhwariyāhs*, a Hindi word meaning "half and half". They were better known as *Malkānās*. These communities would, for instance, get a marriage solemnized according to the Muslim rites and then send for a Hindu priest to perform the Hindu rites as well. Their names also were such as, by a changeable ending, could be made to look like Hindu or Muslim names; for instance a man would call himself Fath Singh among Hindus and Fath Khān among Muslims. They were generally looked upon as Muslims in spite of these peculiarities. In 1924, however, the Arya Samājists launched a vigorous movement to reclaim them to Hinduism. They were successful in some areas; as these communities had neither the knowledge nor the consciousness

³⁵ The Meos are believed to be of the same stock as the Mīnās living in the Aravalli Hills. They have a tradition that their ancestor was converted under Quṭb-u'd-dīn (Aibak) (*Gazetteer of the Gurgaon District*, pp. 51, 52). In the Gurgaon District there were 129,000 Meos according to the 1901 census. In the same district a tribe known as Khānzādāhs was Muslim, having descended from Jadon Rājputs. It is reported that their ancestors were converted in the reign of Firuz Shāh (*ibid.*, pp. 51-53). One third of the total Rājput population of the area was Muslim (*Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab, I*).

³⁶ Bābur, II, p. 523.



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of Islam which could breed deep loyalties, an appeal on the basis of their social customs and their pride in their Rājput ancestry did not prove ineffectual. The Muslims were greatly perturbed, and they started counter-measures. Muslim missionary effort to make orthodox Muslims of these communities also was not entirely unsuccessful; the net result was that a minority acceded fully to Islam and gave up their dual loyalties, but another minority was lost completely. Many, however, preferred to maintain their peculiar customs. Since independence, however, Muslim influence has so weakened and social pressure in the rural areas has increased to such an extent that there have been large scale reversions to Hinduism from among such communities and even from among other poorer classes who depended for their livelihood upon the patronage of their neighbours.

There are many families, however, who were converted but who have no tradition of their origin. It is only among a few prominent families that the memory of conversion is still green; for instance a well-known Muslim group of Delhi families remembers its Brahmin origin.³⁷ There is very little evidence of mass conversions in this area; Islam spread slowly through the conversion and absorption of isolated individuals, who, at one time or another, changed their convictions and became Muslims. Ordinary individuals do not emphasise their origin too much; to some who sought the sanctuary of Islam from the discriminations of the caste system because they had belonged to the lower strata of the society such a memory would be painful and humiliating, hence their efforts would be directed towards obliterating it. Gradually they would be so completely absorbed into the Muslim society that no one would remember their origin. Through inter-marriage they would lose even the racial characteristics that they might have possessed. In this region, where the Muslims never rose above a small percentage of the population and where the proportion of settlers from other Muslim countries was one of the highest, the number of conversions could not have been too large.

³⁷ They were a family of ophthalmic physicians practising the Ūnāni system. The family has now mostly migrated to Pakistan.



Another important area now needs discussion: it is Bengal, where lives one of the largest Muslim populations anywhere in the world, and where in addition the Muslims form a fairly high percentage of the total population. Indeed in 1947 East Bengal had a Muslim majority and became a part of Pakistan. Some areas of Indian Bengal as well had Muslim majorities at the time of the Partition.³⁸ There are several legends in Bengal regarding the success of Muslim missionary work before the establishment of Muslim rule. There may be some truth in them, because Chittagong was, in all probability, a centre of Arab commercial activity. It is, however, difficult to base any definite conclusions on such evidence. More reliable data are available for the period after the Muslim conquest.

Buddhism survived longer in Bengal. Even today the largest Buddhist community in the Subcontinent resides in East Pakistan. One reason of this phenomenon may have been the geographical proximity to the Eastern lands of Buddhism where the faith is still strong and vigorous. In any case, in the eleventh century Mahāyāna Buddhism with a strong mixture of *Shaktism* and *Tantrism* was still prevalent in Bengal.³⁹ Hinduism had been revived in Bengal by the Hindu rulers of the Sena dynasty; their method was not always peaceful persuasion. The bitterness left in Buddhist hearts and expressed at the time of the Muslim conquest indicates that the Hindu monarchs had adopted a policy of persecution and degradation of the Buddhists. The result was that they looked upon the Muslims not as invaders but as their deliverers from the tyranny of Hindu rule and the avengers of their humiliation at the hands of the Brahmins. One cult of Mahāyāna Buddhism at this time was known as *Dharma*; the book *Shūnīya Purāna* written by Rāmai Pandit was looked upon as their scripture. It was written in the eleventh century, but interpolations were made after the Muslim conquest of Bengal. These show the sentiments of the Buddhist sects towards the Muslim conquerors. There is a passage which speaks of a murderous assault by Brahmins upon the followers of *Dharma* because

³⁸ E.g., Murshidabad, where the figures were, total 1,640,530, Muslims, 927, 747, *Census of India Report, Bengal, 1941, IV, Tables, pp. 84, 85.*

³⁹ Chand, p. 213.



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they failed to pay certain religious exactions demanded from them by the Brahmins. The Buddhists were terrified and having no means of escape prayed to Dharma to come to their rescue. At this Dharma, to answer their prayers, incarnated itself in the form of a Muslim. The deities of heaven incarnated themselves as the Prophet Muḥammad and other religious personalities of Islam. The writer of the passage did not know the Muslim beliefs in detail; **Brahmā becomes Muḥammad, Viṣṇu becomes a paighambar, the Persian word for a prophet, and Shiva becomes Adam.** The lesser deities adopt more humble forms, like those of Sufi *shaikhs*, *qāḍis* and theologians. **The goddesses incarnate themselves as Muslim women saints.** The sun, the moon, and many other gods join the Muslim army as foot soldiers. Then they fall upon the Hindus and punish them severely.⁴⁰ Many a song breathes the same spirit. The *Dharma Gājan* has a song which, among other references to Islam, proclaims that "caste distinctions will slowly disappear, because there is a Muslim in every Hindu family". This perhaps has a reference to Islam penetrating even the Hindu families and making converts from them. It shows no understanding of Muslim teachings but it contains sentiments of respect and admiration for Islam and a faith in its ultimate destiny. For instance:

Thou art, O Khudā, I know, superior to all others.

How I yearn to hear the Qur'ān from Thy lips !

Niranjana transformed to Allah will confer blessings.

The *Bada Janani* has an invocation at the end in which the saints and the Prophet are requested to shower blessings on the devout and to humiliate their enemies.⁴¹

Such sentiments themselves constitute almost a half-way house towards the acceptance of Islam. It is, therefore, not surprising that missionary efforts should have been so successful in Bengal. On account of the silent and self-effacing methods adopted by the Sufi missionaries it is as difficult to reconstruct a history of their efforts in Bengal as it is elsewhere. The biographical literature about the Sufi *shaikhs* of Bengal is even more sketchy and unrewarding than usual; besides, it possesses more than its legitimate share of pious fables. However, it is

⁴⁰ Sen, Dinesh Chandra, pp. 36, 37.

⁴¹ Sarkar, Benoy Kumar, pp. 225 ff.; Chand, pp. 216, 217.



possible to glean a few significant facts from it. The first Sufi about whom we read, Shaiikh Jalāl-u'd-dīn of Tabriz,⁴² belonged to the Suhrawardī *silsilah*. He wandered through Multan and Delhi and ultimately settled down at a place then known as Bandar Deva Maḥal. It was customary, says the legend, to send a young man to the local temple, where a demon came in the night and devoured him. The saint came to know this because he heard lamentations in the house where he was staying and was told that the son of his hostess had been chosen as the victim for the night. The saint stole into the temple after the victim had been led there. In the morning, when the people went to the temple, the saint told them that he had killed the demon and saved the young man; therefore it was no longer necessary to send any more victims. Perhaps the kernel of truth in this fable is that there was a shrine of some deity to whom human sacrifices were offered. In the 13th century Bengal was full of Shāktas who had perverted their original philosophy, so that the existence of a cult believing in human sacrifice is quite possible. The shaiikh seems to have rescued the youth from the clutches of the performers of the bloody rite. He had considerable success in his missionary work because all our authorities, even though they neither agree upon the date of his death nor give us any clue about the place of his burial, are unanimous as to his success as a missionary. Another famous figure among the Sufi saints of Bengal was Shaiikh Sirāj-u'd-dīn 'Uṭhmān, who was a disciple of Nizām-u'd-dīn Awliyā and, after him, of Naṣīr-u'd-dīn Maḥmūd, commonly known as "the Lamp of Delhi". In the 14th century Sirāj-u'd-dīn was sent specially to work in Bengal because he was born at Lakhnauti, the capital of Bengal.⁴³ There were other Sufis as well working at that time; one of these was 'Alā-u'l-Ḥaqq 'Alā-u'd-dīn, who became, in his later years, a disciple of Shaiikh Sirāj-u'd-dīn 'Uṭhmān. The extent of the influence of these saints can be gauged from the fact that 'Alā-u'd-dīn spent so much on social work that the reigning monarch of Bengal came to suspect that the money

⁴² Sijzī, pp. 112, 132, 165, 180; Jamālī, pp. 164 ff, etc. There is a short note on him in Nizāmī, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farīd-u'd-dīn Ganj Shakar*, p. 15 fn.

⁴³ Mīr Khurd, p. 251; Firīshṭah, II, p. 399, 400.



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was defalcated from the royal treasury, of which the *shaikh*'s father was the keeper. He exiled the *shaikh* to Sunārgāon, but during his absence the expenditure on social work was doubled.⁴⁴ The monarch was satisfied and the *shaikh* was permitted to return to the capital. The money on which the *khānqāhs* were run came from the contributions made by pious admirers of the presiding saints. The money was spent mostly on social and charitable work.

'Alā-u'l-Ḥaqq was succeeded in his mission by his son Nūr-u'l-Ḥaqq, commonly known as Nūr Quṭb-i-'Ālam. He was given a stiff training in social service. He is famous for his intervention in matters of state. Sultān Ghiyāth-u'd-dīn of Bengal was assassinated by a Hindu tributary, Kans.⁴⁵ The subsequent two rulers did nothing to avenge the death of Ghiyāth-u'd-dīn because it seems that Kans was too powerful.⁴⁶ The second of these, Shams-u'd-dīn, was a weakling and he also was murdered by Kans, who now assumed the royal title. Kans adopted a policy of intolerance and hostility towards Islam. He alienated all the theologians and Sufis and executed some of the leading ones who might have been a source of danger to him. The *shaikh* Nūr Quṭb had been a personal friend and fellow student of Ghiyāth-u'd-dīn and could not have been happy with the political developments. The Hindu ruler's efforts to uproot Islam from his dominions led the *shaikh* to appeal to the ruler of Jaunpur, Sultān Ibrāhīm of the Sharqī dynasty, to intervene. This appeal was strongly supported by the theologians of the Jaunpur court. The sultan marched upon Bengal with a large army. Kans was panic-stricken and requested Nūr Quṭb to intercede. At his suggestion, with all humility, Kans abdicated in favour of his son who was, with his consent, converted to Islam and raised to the throne with the title of Jalāl-u'd-dīn. The new sultan restored Islam to its previous position. The *shaikh* now interceded with Sultan Ibrāhīm for the young monarch, who was only twelve years old. The sultan did not like this change in the attitude of the saint and was annoyed at the

⁴⁴ Asadī-u'l-Hāshimī, I, p. 368; 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, p. 143.

⁴⁵ Salim, p. 108.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 110.



waste of his effort, but he went back home. The saint explained his intercession by saying that the sultan's campaign was to free Bengal from the tyranny of a Hindu; now that the ruler was a Muslim and Islam was no longer persecuted, the sultan could not fight against a brother Muslim monarch. The saint's optimism was, however, unjustified because as soon as Kans felt secure, he dethroned his son and assumed the royal title again. He made a large cow of gold and passed his son through it and distributed the gold among the Brahmins. Thus he thought that he had succeeded in reconverting his son to Hinduism. Kans then renewed his policy of the persecution of Islam with even greater vigour and executed several leading Muslim men of religion including some of Nūr Quṭb's relations. Kans died in 1393 after a reign of seven years.⁴⁷

His son, Jalāl-u'd-dīn, whom he had dethroned, succeeded him. His conversion to Islam had originally been at the instance of his father for political reasons and then Kans had put him through the Hindu ritual of reconversion, but Jalāl-u'd-dīn was not willing to be reconverted to Hinduism. It is not recorded whether he conformed during his father's lifetime to Hinduism even against his will, but in view of Kans' attitude this seems more likely. However, after the death of his father, Jalāl-u'd-dīn acted like an enthusiastic Muslim and showed all the zeal of a convert, even to the extent of punishing those Brahmins who had told his father how to reconvert him. He helped in the expansion of Islam.⁴⁸ The family of Nūr Quṭb carried on their missionary activities for several generations after his death.

The most respected shrine in East Pakistan today is the tomb of the famous saint Shaikh Jalāl Mujarrad of Sylhet.⁴⁹ He was not a quietist like many other Sufis; he was responsible for the annexation of Sylhet to the Muslim kingdom of Bengal. The tradition says that there was a Muslim, Burhān-u'd-dīn, resident in Sylhet, who sacrificed a cow on the occasion of the birth of a son. This led to a dispute with a local Brahmin who complained to the Hindu rāja. He was enraged and

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-116.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 117.

⁴⁹ *Ikrām, Āb-i-Kawthar*, pp. 355 ff.



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ordered the execution of the infant and the mutilation of the father. Burhān-u'd dīn ran to Gaur, the capital of Bengal. An expedition was ordered against the rājā, but because Assam had a reputation for black magic the morale of the Muslim troops was low and they were defeated. An appeal was made to the saint, who himself participated in the fight; because of his reputation for spiritual greatness, the Muslim soldiers were reassured and gained confidence. The rājā was defeated and Sylhet was annexed to the Muslim kingdom.

The fourteenth century was a period of expansion of Muslim authority in Bengal and the adjoining territories. A significant part was played in this process by warrior saints who were eager to take up the cause of any persecuted community. This often resulted in quarrels with the native authority, followed, almost invariably, by annexation.⁵⁰ The Hindu governments in this area were harsh and it irked these Sufis to see injustice and persecution. The Buddhist populace often sought their intervention against the tyranny of the Hindu rulers. This also shows how elastic were the methods adopted by the Sufis. They acted mostly as peaceful missionaries, but if they saw that the espousal of some just cause required military action, they were not averse to fighting.

The Sufis did not compromise with Hindu beliefs and customs; they did not adopt the Ismā'īlī technique of gradual conversion; but they were not totally unwilling to take account of human psychology. They established their *khānqāhs* and shrines at places which already had a reputation for sanctity before Islam.⁵¹ Thus some of the traditional gatherings were transformed into new festivals.

As the result of these efforts, Bengal in course of time became a Muslim land. In spite of its distance from the main centres of Islam, it attracted a large number of Sufis and missionaries throughout the period between the establishment of Muslim rule and its conquest by the Mughuls. By then the situation had become more stable so far as conversions were concerned. The attraction for the Sufis was the fertile ground

⁵⁰ Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *History of Bengal* pp. 68, 70; Qanungo, Kalika Ranjan, is the author of this chapter in this work.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*



for conversion which Bengal provided because of the presence of numerous cults of Buddhism. They failed to withstand the impact of Islam because their followers had neither deep conviction nor blind loyalty to their faith. Many converts were gained by the Sufis through their sympathy and readiness to serve the downtrodden population. Besides, for men branded with inferiority for generations, admission into the democratic brotherhood of Islam was an exhilarating experience.

This brings us to the end of our brief survey of missionary efforts. The question which needs some discussion is whether political coercion in any form played a part in gaining converts. In the course of several centuries in such a large area it cannot be expected that all the rulers were free from religious bias or the desire to win converts even by coercion; but it is generally recognized that its extent was very limited. The largest expansion has come through patient missionary effort. Writing in 1896 Arnold said that "among the sixty-six millions of Indian Musalmans there are vast numbers of converts or descendants of converts, in whose conversion force played no part and the only influences at work were the teaching and persuasion of peaceful missionaries".⁵² At another place the same author argues: "How little was effected towards the spread of Islam by violence on the part of the Muhammadan rulers may be judged from the fact [that] even in the centres of the Muhammadan power, such as Delhi and Agra, the Muhammadans in modern times in the former district hardly exceeded one-tenth, and in the latter they did not form one-fourth of the population".⁵³ There are instances on record where isolated families were converted under political pressure, but they were very few. As the historians were anxious to mention any solicitude shown by a monarch for the expansion or glory of Islam the fact of the conversion of any group of persons was recorded with pride and enthusiasm; yet the chronicles do not contain many instances of conversion under political pressure. When a new area was conquered, sometimes those who had offered stiff resistance were given quarter on condition that they accepted Islam.

⁵² Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 254.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 262.



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This happened in rare cases; and even then such conversions did not prove lasting. There are known instances of the reversion of such families to their old faith; when the storm subsided they found no reason to continue to be Muslims.⁵⁴ During peaceful times, there was no coercion. Occasionally inducement to conversion was offered to some rebels who had been awarded capital punishment; they could earn pardon by accepting Islam. This device was used more on political than religious considerations because if the motive of rebellion was to subvert Muslim rule, the conversion of the rebel would provide a salutary remedy. Under a few monarchs other inducements were sometimes offered. For instance, some persons in the Panjab became converts on the promise of employment or for the purpose of getting back some lands which had been forfeited for some other valid reason.⁵⁵ Similarly, in the earlier period, some persons taken as prisoners of war were converted to Islam. All such instances of conversion taken together, however, were not numerous

It remains a moot point whether the imposition of *jizyah* had any bearing upon conversion in the Subcontinent. It is quite true that conversion meant freedom from the tax. This could also be gained by joining government service of any kind because *jizyah* was not levied on government servants.⁵⁶ The proportion of Muslims was higher in the ranks of public servants in spite of their numerical inferiority but the door was not shut upon the Hindus at any time. We have seen how Muḥammad bin Qāsim followed an enlightened policy of recruiting large numbers of natives to the ranks of government service; indeed it was this policy which made a success of the Arab government when it was established, because the newly appointed Hindu and Buddhist government servants spread into the countryside and created confidence among the people and put the administrative and revenue machinery once again into gear.⁵⁷ There is no period of Muslim rule

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-263.

⁵⁵ Ibbetson, "The Musulmans of the Punjab", *Indian Evangelical Review*, X (1884), p. 163; also *Gazetteer of the North-West Provinces*, VI, p. 64; XIV, part III, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli*, pp. 96, 97; for the Mughuls, Hasan, p. 297.

⁵⁷ Kūfi, p. 210, 211.



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in any part of the Subcontinent when non-Muslims were excluded from the civil and military services. It was, therefore, theoretically possible for any non-Muslim to escape from *jizyah*. However, this theoretical possibility could be negated by practical difficulties. It is not easy to give up one's profession simply to escape a tax; besides not every one was qualified for government service which required military proficiency or technical skills. In any case a Muslim was likely to be better connected and thus more advantageously placed for securing a post. Therefore, the financial disadvantage could not be completely negated by openings in the government service.

It is true that theoretically a Muslim was liable to be conscripted in any military emergency whereas a non-Muslim was exempt from any such liability, but in an empire where the State could recruit large standing armies and in fact did maintain them, this liability, except in the earlier period, was not much of a reality. The Muslims were expected to pay a part of their savings every year as *zakāt*; the percentage was as high as onefortieth of all wealth which had been in possession for an entire year. However, the state did not realize this tax and its payment was a matter of individual conscience because it was earmarked for charitable purposes. The Muslims in the Subcontinent have mostly paid it, but a tithe which becomes voluntary and is paid out of regard for one's religious convictions ceases to be irksome. The imposition of *jizyah*, therefore, could well have provided an inducement for conversion. Actually it does not seem to have done so. When 'Alamgīr I reimposed *jizyah* after a lapse of 115 years, no sudden spurt in the number of conversions is recorded. Without the availability of statistics a definite conclusion is difficult to reach; but even in the epistles of such an ardent advocate of the reimposition of *jizyah* as the Mujaddid-i-alf-i-thānī, the argument that the abolition of *jizyah* had in any way affected the propagation of Islam was not advanced; nor does Badā'unī, who bewailed Akbar's lapse from orthodoxy and disapproved not only of the abolition of *jizyah* but also of the growth of Hindu influence in the affairs of the Empire, say that the abolition of *jizyah* had hampered the spread of Islam. There is no record of any significant difference in the rate of conver-

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sions either as the result of the abolition of *jizyah* or of its reimposition. If there had been a change such a development could not have escaped the notice of the chroniclers, especially of men like Badā'unī, who has included in his history all that could be said against Akbar's religious policies.

If *jizyah* had been a crushing burden upon the non-Muslims, it could have led to conversions, but it was not too heavy a burden. It was levied only on able-bodied male adults who had a surplus of income after meeting the necessary expenses of maintaining themselves and their families. The religious classes like priests and monks were exempt. The rates charged were the equivalent in local currency of twelve, twenty-four and forty-eight dirhams, depending upon the income of the assessee.⁵⁸ The assessment seems to have been lenient because at no time did *jizyah* form an important source of revenue, and a very large percentage of the non-Muslim population was exempt for one reason or another.⁵⁹ Even if a tax is heavy but bearable, people are averse to changing their religion to escape it; but when it is not heavy, there is little inducement for conversion. Therefore, it does not seem likely that *jizyah* helped, in any significant manner, conversion to Islam.

Indeed, all classes of persons who accepted Islam for some inducement or to escape punishment for a rebellion or who were taken prisoners in wars, never formed a large proportion of the native Muslim population of the subcontinent. Their descendants would form an insignificant part of the Muslim community of the subcontinent today. The vast majority were converted, not through any government pressure, but by the slow and patient process of missionary work, which was weakened by the establishment of the British Empire in the Subcontinent but never completely died out. The pace has become extremely slow because the Sufi *silsilahs* which devoted themselves to such work are no longer so active. The loyalty to Islam has taken on a political aspect and missionary work no longer attracts the same kind of person as it did in those days. Besides it should not be forgotten that Islam has lost the preeminence and glamour which it had in the days when it

⁵⁸ Hasan, p. 296.

⁵⁹ Tripathi, pp. 290-291.



was the dominant power not only in the subcontinent but in the entire East. This does not constitute political pressure; but the subtle suggestion which comes from the political greatness and power of the adherents of a religion is no longer available to Islam, because everywhere it is politically weak and, whereas once it was in the vanguard of human progress, today it is almost in the rear. Despite these handicaps, missionary effort, disorganised and weak as it is, still exists and achieves a meagre success here and there, mostly in winning occasional converts.

However, not all the Muslims of the subcontinent are of native blood. We cannot accept the assertions of all those who claim a foreign origin, but there is a substantial element of foreign origin. Its influence upon the outlook and culture of the Muslim community of the subcontinent has been profound. It has already been mentioned that conversion to Islam in the subcontinent was a much deeper change than it was in other areas. The reason was that Hinduism, as a defensive armour against the spread of Islam, developed more and more exclusiveness as time went on. Unless it was a case of the mass conversion of a large social group the convert had to cut off all intimate contacts with his relations and to identify himself with the Muslim community, whose laws and institutions were based in Islam and whose dietary habits, cookery, dress and furniture were all modelled upon foreign patterns. Architectural remains and paintings bear witness to the continuity of Iranian and Central Asian traditions in the life of the Muslim community in the subcontinent. Apart from the extent of the foreign influence which pervaded the life of the Muslim community in the subcontinent, especially after the advent of the Turks, the numerical proportion of Muslims of foreign origin is not insignificant.

The dynasties which ruled at Delhi were foreign in origin; it is true that mixture took place with native blood, but the foreign element was kept alive. Among the greater Mughul emperors, only two had mothers of Hindu origin. Among the earlier Muslim rulers of Delhi, the instances are still fewer. The Muslims were free from racial prejudices, but among the Muslims of the subcontinent, especially among those who had come from other countries, the doctrine of *kufw*, adopted



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from the Arabs, found considerable prevalence. This was so interpreted as to lead Muslims generally to marry within their own group. Of course there was no religious ban on marriages outside the group, and the offspring of mixed marriages faced no more difficulties than the offspring of any marriage which is considered a *mēsalliance* in any society; yet the growth of this custom has tended to keep some foreign racial characteristics alive in certain groups.

The dominant foreign element is Central Asian because the conquerors after the tenth century were mostly of Turkic origin. These generals came with their troops and camp followers, who settled down in the lands of their adoption. The sultans of Delhi adopted a successful method of keeping turbulent elements in the countryside under their control and of keeping the communications open. They established colonies of Muslims in strategically located places.⁶⁰ These were mostly fortified townships; they maintained a most intimate communal life because in the beginning they were surrounded by danger, being very much like an armed camp in the midst of a hostile population. A sense of common danger developed in them a strong communal consciousness; every small township of these colonists became a well-integrated social organism. It was natural that in these circumstances those foreign Muslims, who had settled down in this new environment, should possess a greater feeling of unity than the inhabitants of overwhelmingly Muslim lands. The strong sense of integration produced in these communities a bond of brotherhood which was capable of withstanding considerable strain; it had repercussions in other social, political and emotional spheres. The smaller the settlement, the greater was the strength of these ties. Therefore, scattered over a large area in the subcontinent, there are communities which may even have forgotten the circumstances in which they were integrated or the history of their origin, but which for reasons unknown to themselves have striven to maintain their existence within the community of Islam. This striving has not always been free from a pride in their traditions which have sometimes even gone against the egalitarian leanings of Islam. Some have thought that this was the result of contacts with the caste

⁶⁰ Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, pp. 214, 215.



system in Hinduism; though this possibility cannot be completely ruled out in the instance of those who have been converted from Hinduism in caste groups like the Lohānās or the Jāts, yet so far as the Muslims of foreign origin are concerned they have been influenced more deeply by their earlier history of forming groups living together and facing the same dangers.

The pattern of Muslim communal life was set in those early days, but it continued even when the danger ceased to exist or diminished visibly. The new-comers took the spirit of Muslim communal life for granted and either formed communities on the same pattern or were absorbed into the communities already established and thriving. This process was helped by the Hindu exclusiveness engendered by the caste system and the doctrine of pollution by contact with people of other religions, especially those who eat beef. The result has been that fairly large sections of the Muslim population in the areas where they were in a minority still bear racial characteristics and follow customs which betray their foreign origin. Such anthropological studies have not been undertaken widely and data are not easily available, but the Mongoloid characteristics which predominate in the physical features of many groups, especially among families hailing from the former United Provinces and Delhi, betray their Central Asian origin. That these characteristics should still be present in sizable sections of the Muslim population shows how close-knit these communities were and how, through the institutions they developed, they succeeded in maintaining their foreign racial characteristics without making a fetish of them or, in the later days, even being conscious of their existence. Many a family which prides itself on its Arab blood is really Central Asian in origin; though there are Arab and Iranian families as well. It is difficult to distinguish the latter racially by their physical features because the Aryan and Semitic stocks coming from outside blend so easily with the native Aryan and Dravidian races.

The Hindu tendency to classify the Muslims into four "castes" of Saiyids, Shaikhs, Mughuls and Pathans, which has been accepted uncritically by some Western authors, is really



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an over-simplification of the main racial distinctions among the Muslims of the subcontinent depending upon their foreign or native origin. The Mughuls and Pathans are easily recognised as the people from Central Asia and the Pushtu-speaking regions; however, the former include only those Central Asians who entered the subcontinent after the Mughul invasion. The Saiyids claim to be descended from the Prophet and therefore to be of Arab origin. The Shaikhs were the people of all other origins who had been living in the subcontinent before the Mughul conquest. This is the reason why in different areas the word is used with different meanings. In many areas of modern West Pakistan it signifies a convert family which has only recently entered the fold of Islam; in other areas it has a wider significance. There are many groups who do not put themselves into any of these classes; for instance the Muslim Rājputs and Jāts. The significant fact, however, is that these classifications are on a racial basis. They do not signify barriers that cannot be crossed, but ones which in fact are only rarely crossed.

The flow of foreign migrants into the subcontinent increased greatly as a result of the Mongol invasions of the Islamic world because the Sultanate of Delhi offered an asylum to the Muslim refugees. As early as Balban's reign, we hear of large colonies of these migrants in Delhi, so much so that they were settled in different quarters, providing for the migrants an environment where their former ties did not have to be broken abruptly.⁶¹ Even when conditions in the neighbouring Islamic lands were stabilised by the conversion of the Mongols to Islam, the Muslim states in the subcontinent, being perennially short of Muslim personnel, continued to encourage immigration. There was even a department under some governments to look after the new-comers, who thus had little difficulty in finding suitable employment.⁶² The restoration of the Mughul Empire after Humāyūn's return from Iran established a tradition of migration from Iran, which continued until the Muslim states of India could no longer offer prospects of employment. Iran contributed a

⁶¹ Baranī, pp. 111, 112; also, Firishṭah, I, pp. 131, 132.

⁶² Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, III, pp. 97-99. The officer in charge was in attendance at the court and was called *ḥājib-u'l-ghurabā*.



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good deal to the Indo-Muslim cultural heritage; its share among the immigrants was significant, but not as large as that of Central Asia. The tradition of migration from Muslim lands never came to an end; it has already been mentioned that under the Nizam's government, until quite recently, this policy continued and many families went from North India to earn a livelihood and settled down there; the Nizam's dominions attracted Muslims not only from the rest of the subcontinent but also from Arabia and Iran. Many a distinguished family of administrators, soldiers and scholars during the Mughul rule hailed from Central Asia and Iran. In short, the exact percentage of families of foreign origin and of those who still betray foreign racial characteristics is difficult to assess, but it cannot be denied that they form a considerable element in the Muslim population, and one whose importance has not found recognition in the writings of scholars.⁶³ Because of their links with traditional Islamic culture the influence of these elements in giving a shape to the culture of the Muslim community of the subcontinent was far greater than their numbers would have justified. This was the reason why the Hindus said of a convert to Islam that he had "turned Turk". It would be a mistake to think that the foreign elements formed an exclusive aristocracy. Many a craftsman was encouraged to immigrate to bring to the subcontinent skills which were unknown there. We read of master weavers, carpetmakers, painters, builders, gardeners and others who came into the subcontinent. It would be correct to say that the majority of the Muslim aristocracy was of foreign origin, but the aristocracy was not exclusively foreign, nor did all foreign elements

⁶³ Some of the earlier British writers recognized that the Central Asian racial strain was dominant among the Muslims of certain areas. Later this fact was not given any prominence and the theory grew up that the Muslims were of the same racial stock as other inhabitants of the subcontinent, which is only partly correct and applies only to the local converts to Islam. James Mill says (I, p. 153): "The population of those great countries consisted of two Races: one, who may here be called the Hindu; another, the Mahomedan Race. The first were the aboriginal inhabitants of the country. The latter were subsequent invaders..." This is not a fully scientific statement but gives the general impression created upon the minds of the foreign observers on whom Mill must have relied. Twelve years later Herklots expressed the same sentiment (pp. xi, xii). When the racial differences were ignored by British writers the Muslims came to be looked upon mainly as converts from Hinduisim with no racial characteristics of their own, which is an extreme view and incorrect.

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belong to the aristocracy. It could not be otherwise because of the levelling tendencies of Islam, though a certain pride of birth survived among the well-born, whether native or foreign in origin, through the institution of *kufw*, never legally enforced but almost universally practised.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *Kufw* is the doctrine which encourages marriages between groups which are compatible; the Muslims of the subcontinent have considered it desirable, but a marriage violating it is not *ipso facto* void or irregular; *Nūr-u'l-hidāyah* (Cawnpore, n.d.), pp. 247, 248.



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IV

Towards Integration into a Single Community

Small Muslim communities were established in various parts of the subcontinent at different times. They did not make a single community all at once. An attempt has been made in the previous pages to show how these communities came into existence. The circumstances of their birth and their spiritual background were many and various; they lived in a habitat which in those days of meagre and slow communications was too vast to enable them to have much direct contact among themselves. The converts were from peoples speaking different languages and nurtured in different faiths; the foreigners did not all hail from the same lands; they did not belong to a single racial stock; they did not speak the same language. All these factors would make difficult the integration of the different Muslim communities that found themselves in this subcontinent.

Even though they belonged to the same faith, they were not followers of the same schools of thought within Islam, and often there was animosity among the followers of different sects because they worked against one another. Great faiths have sometimes shown greater tolerance to rival religions than to their own heresies or serious differences in doctrine.

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Islam has been no exception, and at times sectarian loyalties have developed into grave intolerance.¹ These small and scattered communities could well have remained isolated and divided without the development of any sense of unity. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss the factors which, in spite of these difficulties, did, in course of time, produce an integrated community, divided on the basis of doctrine, speaking different languages and descended from different racial stocks, yet remarkably united in sentiment. Even today these differences have not been obliterated and are quite capable of expressing themselves with distressing intensity, yet the sense of unity is stronger than the differences and, on all occasions of stress, asserts itself unmistakably.

The major factor in creating this unity has been Islam itself. Islam is a faith which always seeks to create a community. The reason is that although Islam has no church, does not possess a priesthood and has no separate organization for religious purposes, yet it has a ritual which needs organization, and imposes duties on the faithful which need cooperative effort. There are certain duties which are clearly communal in nature and can be performed only by communities and not by individuals.² Having eschewed a priesthood, Islam had to organize a community for the performance of collective duties. Even the Muslim state is based upon the conception of the community organized for the discharge of those duties which Islam imposes upon it. It is for this reason that Islam

¹ The relations between the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs have not always been friendly at the popular level or, for that matter, in politics. The Muslims of the subcontinent have been more tolerant of these differences. When Iran and the Ottoman Empire were at loggerheads, the Mughul Empire maintained more cordial relations with the Safavids, and their political rivalry was not coloured by sectarian ill-feeling. Irani men of talent who were Shi'ahs were always welcome. 'Alamgir I was personally a staunch Sunni and did not like the Shi'ah doctrine, but he would not brook any injustice towards his Shi'ah officers; see letter from 'Alamgir to Muḥammad Amīn, Sandilawī, letter no. 41.

² The prayers are congregational; the pilgrimage to Mecca needs organization; defence cannot be carried out without organization. There are many functions of the community which can be discharged only through a temporary or a permanent organization, like the burial of the dead, looking after the poor, the maintenance of the teachings of Islam in their social aspects, etc. The Prophet has left many traditions which lay emphasis upon the social aspect of Islam and the need for discipline. A good discussion of the need of political organization is in Āzād, Abu'l-Kalām, *Mas'alah-i-khilāfat wa Jazirah-i-'Arab*.



finds an expression in the organization of the community and the state; it was this aspect of Islam which led the jurists to the conclusion that the establishment of the caliphate, the classical form of the Muslim state, was a canonical necessity and not just politically expedient.³ Sectarian differences have often found political expression and led to fissures in the body politic of Islam, primarily because of this need for organization. The Muslim community must be organized at various levels for the discharge of its functions. Thus Islam has a fundamental political orientation which sometimes has puzzled observers who do not understand the basic need in Islam for lay organization.

Universalism is a fundamental doctrine of Islam which lays emphasis upon faith and seeks to eradicate the differences created by birth and environment.⁴ Islam succeeded only for a short while in establishing a state which brought within its jurisdiction all the countries where the Muslims had political dominance, but it never lost this ideal. Any deviation from this principle was a compromise of doctrine due to necessity, but the ideal was not given up in theory. The recent growth of nationalism in the Muslim world has undermined this ideal, but it has not succeeded in wiping it out. Before the rise of nationalism, there was no competing doctrine. Parochial feelings, sectarian differences and cultural pride have existed, but none of these could be an article of faith. Feelings of particularism were not unknown, but they were not raised to the status of an ideal or a belief. Particularism was active in the subcontinent as well, but it did not entirely overshadow the doctrine of the unity of Islam. Hence the main credit for creating a feeling of unity among the Muslims of the subcontinent must go to Islam.

Islam alone, however, could not have brought about the integration of Muslims of such diverse origins over so vast an area. There is a sense of Islamic brotherhood in the world community of Islam, but in spite of such institutions as the annual pilgrimage to Mecca this feeling has remained vague

³ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, pp. 165, 166.

⁴ Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli*, pp. 22, 23, discusses this question briefly.



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and undefined. It is stronger among Muslims than among the followers of other religions, but it has not proved sufficiently strong to compel expression in the creation of institutions vital enough to affect the policies of Muslim nations. The Muslims of the subcontinent would not have been welded into a well-integrated community if they had not been drawn together by various other forces in addition to their religious belief. They have developed numerous common characteristics; some differences have persisted throughout history, but they are minor compared to the bonds which have united them into a community. A sense of unity depends upon such diverse factors that it is impossible to predict at any time whether it can withstand the pull of centrifugal forces; however, the centripetal trends proved stronger in the Muslim community up to the attainment of independence from British rule.

The Indian subcontinent has been divided by linguistic and racial differences; during the greater part of its history it has remained split into many political units; because of the racial and linguistic differences many communities possess all the characteristics of nations; yet the Hindus possess a basic philosophy and a way of life which has produced a visible homogeneity. Hence those characteristics which the Muslims of the subcontinent have borrowed from their habitat have a quality of uniformity. This has at once created homogeneity among them and made them distinct from other Muslim peoples without in any way alienating them from the Muslim world.

The Muslims of the subcontinent have always been motivated by an intense love of Islam in their policies and movements. When at the appropriate place these movements are discussed, it will be seen how some of the attitudes of the community have been altruistic in the extreme where questions relating to the Muslim world have been concerned. Besides, their poets have sung more of Islam than of their own heroes and achievements; they have preached the ideals of Muslim unity with great fervour, whereas questions relating to their domestic problems have found a secondary place; they have never thought of themselves as an entity separate from the community of Islam. The Turks have called themselves Turks, the Arabs have laid emphasis upon their being Arabs, the



Iranians have sought glory in their pre-Islamic history, but the Muslims of the subcontinent had only one name for their community prior to the establishment of Pakistan and that was "Muslims". In their own language when they had to talk of themselves as distinct from the Muslims of other lands, they seldom used the appellation "Indian Muslims"; the expression "Muslims of India" was more common.⁵ At no time has their sense of belonging to the larger world of Islam been weak and often it has been stronger than the sense of belonging to their habitat. These attitudes are the result of historical causes, which have been active over long periods and in various forms. A strong factor has been a continuous sense of insecurity.

Many Muslim communities were isolated and had to live in the midst of an alien population. The distinguishing feature, from the very beginning, was not the country of origin but Islam. Among the Muslim communities scattered on the coast of South India there were three types, people of pure Arab race, their descendants by marriage with native women, and converts. The Muslims seem to have maintained these distinctions amongst themselves for some time; gradually, however, they were obliterated. This unifying process was due in part to the fact that distinctions are difficult to maintain in small communities, and partly to the attitude of Islam which does not encourage barriers. In the subcontinent it was due even more to the attitude of the surrounding population, which refused to see any difference between one Muslim and another.⁶ On the whole, they were treated well, but there were occasions when relations were not so happy and there burst out pogroms directed against them.⁷ When such a contingency

⁵ The term in use has been *Musalmānān-i-Hindustān* and seldom *Hindustāni Musalmān*.

⁶ It has been mentioned how every Muslim was called a Turk in many parts of the subcontinent. Mas'udī says that the Indian-born Muslims were called Besars, but so far as the government was concerned it dealt with all the Muslims as a single community by appointing one of them as its chief (Mas'udī, II, pp. 85, 86). Mas'udī's reference is to the town of Simūr in Gujrat in 916.

⁷ Al-'Awfi, chapter II, mentions how the mosque belonging to the small Muslim community in Cambay had been destroyed and many Muslims massacred by the local population. The ruler, however, compensated them after making inquiries and finding that they had been victims of unjust persecution.



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arose they had to act as Muslims and not as Arabs or Indians. With the establishment of Muslim rule the same tendency continued. In Sind the main centres of Muslim strength continued to become more and more Muslim and less and less Arab so that gradually the main division came to be between Muslim and Hindu and not between Arab and native. This process took place in all the areas where the Muslims were established either as rulers or in other capacities. This development seems natural to the Muslims of the subcontinent; yet it was not quite so inevitable judging from other parallels. The Indian Christians never became a part of the European community; even the Anglo-Indians, the children of mixed parentage, were not assimilated into British society. In Muslim lands the racial distinctions have survived; even though thrown into the crucible of a common habitat and a common history, the Arab, the Kurd and the Turk remained distinct. There were waves of Arabs, Turks, Afghans and Iranians entering the subcontinent and there have been large communities of converts, but the Muslims are not divided in any significant manner on this basis. There are many families which have a sense of pride in their real or supposed descent, but beyond an antiquarian interest little significance is attached to it.

It has been mentioned in another context that the Muslim rulers adopted the policy of establishing communities of warlike Muslims for the purpose of controlling refractory areas. This was not an easy assignment because the surrounding population had strong military traditions. Even in the second decade of the twentieth century, for instance, in the area around Kampil, Patiāli and Bhojpūr, in the Doab between the Ganges and the Jumna where Iletmish had planted colonies of Muslims,⁸ the local Rājput population was turbulent, and it was difficult to maintain law and order in the isolated villages. This was the condition after centuries of effort and with the improved communications available to the British. The early Muslim communities, when established, were subject to attacks and had also to take the initiative when communications were threatened. Communities

⁸ Baranī, e.g., p. 58.



situated like these were integrated no doubt, but any Muslim who came and joined them, whether a native convert or a newly arrived foreigner, was accepted, even though he might attach himself to a sub-group for matrimonial purposes. For the population surrounding these communities, the Muslims were all one; therefore the danger was common; hence all Muslims sharing those dangers were bound in a strong communal bond. The Hindus in the areas where the Turks had established their rule called all Muslims Turks, because to them the conversion to the Muslim faith was like being adopted into a racial group. To the Muslims, Turk or non-Turk, it was just conversion to Islam. Turks learnt soon to emphasise their adherence to Islam in the subcontinent and thus became identified with the growing Muslim community.

It would be expected that with the growth of the Muslim power and their almost unchallenged military might this sense of insecurity would disappear. Besides, the growing conciliation between the rulers and the ruled would give the Muslims greater confidence; this was quite natural, but it does not mean that the sense of insecurity was completely eliminated. The Muslims were after all a minority, though their numbers were constantly increasing. The rule of a minority, however strong and well-established, needs constant vigilance and there is an undercurrent of anxiety in the minds of the rulers. Akbar's policy of sharing power with the Hindus and the anxiety of 'Ālamgīr I over the decay of the Muslim element in the government alike arose from the same sense of insecurity. The Muslim Empire was great and mighty, but could its might not be challenged? In overwhelmingly Muslim lands no such anxiety plagues the people because no internal commotion is likely to subject them to the rule of a non-Muslim people; their fears are aroused only in the face of external danger.

In understanding the psychology of the Muslims in the subcontinent it should be understood that their sense of insecurity did not arise from fear of outsiders except during the Mongol inroads and, towards the end, when the British power expanded. Their position, however, could be challenged any day by a Hindu revolt. Muslims from various Islamic



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countries were always welcome because they added to the man-power of Islam; they were looked upon as helpers and not as potential enemies; thus an attitude of identification with the Muslims of other lands grew up which was never uprooted. The Afghan rule was established as the result of a domestic revolution; the establishment of the Mughul rule was resented only by the Afghans who had come into the subcontinent too late to become fully saturated with that feeling of affection for foreign Muslims with which the inhabitants of longer standing were imbued. It is significant that the Muslim population in general remained neutral in the fight between the Afghans and the Mughuls and supported the cause of good government, whoever might be sitting upon the throne of Delhi. It was a Muslim empire which removed their sense of insecurity and, therefore, it received their support, irrespective of its being Mughul or Afghan. The phenomenal success achieved by Sher Shāh as well as Akbar in putting the administration on a sound basis demonstrates the truth of this opinion. When the Muslims found themselves confronted with the prospect of being dominated by the Hindu Marathas, they invited the Afghan Ahmad Shāh Abdālī to come to their rescue.⁹

This was but an external expression of a psychological orientation. The scattered Muslim communities had felt isolated; loyalties to a greater Muslim world gave them a sense of belonging. Similarly the Muslim community in the subcontinent could not forget that there were parts of the world where the Muslims were not confronted with the same dangers. In the security enjoyed by the Muslim world community they found some compensation because by regarding themselves as part of it they could, to some degree, overcome their own sense of insecurity. And later, when they lost their empire, they tried to shake off some of the humiliation of subjection through identification with those Muslim communities that were still free. Besides, the complete decay of Muslim power in the entire world would have made their own task of recovery difficult because it would have gravely undermined their morale and self-confidence as Muslims. This is also the reason why the

⁹ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 279, 280.



Muslims took great pride in their history and were not willing to brook any hostile criticism of their past. This sense of insecurity expressed itself in various ways which will be discussed in the appropriate place. It has sometimes led to empty romanticism, but on the whole its effects have been healthy and have spurred the Muslims to make efforts to preserve their existence as a community. It has never resulted in stupor and defeatism. The policies adopted may not always have been wise, but there can be little doubt about their having brought some reward, however inadequate. This tradition of a continuous common effort has contributed greatly to the integration of the community.

It should not be thought that external pressures contributed nothing in this direction. These pressures, however, did not come from Muslims. The only unwanted and injurious Muslim incursions were by Timūr and Nādir Shāh. They are looked upon as injurious because of the blows they dealt to Muslim prestige and power. If these two invaders had established empires and settled down to strengthen the Muslim hold over the subcontinent, they would not have been unpopular. When Timūr's descendants did succeed in establishing a strong empire they became a part of the history of the Muslim community in their new dominions. When, during the rebellion of 1857 against the British, the Muslims were desirous of getting outside help, they were heartened by the incorrect reports of intended intervention by the Shah of Iran. Of different nature were the incursions by the heathen Mongols into the Sultanate of Delhi, which continued for more than half a century from 1241 to 1306. The danger was averted by the utmost vigilance on the part of the Muslim sultans of Delhi. Their Muslim subjects were fully behind them in this fight. The Mongols were racially nearer to the Turks who were ruling the Muslim empire than many sections of the local Muslim population; but the fight was between the Muslims and the heathen Mongols, not between Indians and Mongols or Mongols and Turks. This fact in itself contributed to the consolidation of the Muslim community by emphasizing the difference between the Muslim and the non-Muslim. The second external pressure came in the shape of the British



domination of the subcontinent. This could have succeeded in welding the Hindus and Muslims together into a single community for some time. It failed to do so for various reasons, but it did bring about a unity of sentiment regarding freedom from foreign control. The Muslim attitude towards the British was, however, coloured by the memory of their imperial past and was essentially different from the Hindu attitude. It would be to anticipate the discussion of various cognate topics to go more fully into this discussion at this stage. The replacement of the Muslim Empire by British rule, however, added to the sense of insecurity which the Muslims had developed and, though they did not all at once give up the prospect of recapturing power, they sought other means of overcoming the danger which they thought threatened their separate existence.

One factor which could and did militate against the creation of a sense of common purpose in the community was the presence of sectarian strife among the Muslims. A religion-conscious community could not be free from sectarian feeling. The hostility between the Sunnis and the Ismā'ilīs was deepened by the political activities of the latter. In the subcontinent, as in several other parts of the Muslim world, there had taken place a bitter struggle for power during the early days when the Ismā'ilīs had subverted the older emirates of Sind.¹⁰ They had even tried to get control of Delhi.¹¹ At the popular level there had been a scramble for converts not only from Hinduism but also from among the Muslim sects.¹² The *Ithnā 'Asharis* were late-comers in the field. However, they gathered a good deal of power in their hands under the Mughuls and excited jealousy. Orthodoxy also came to feel that *Shī'ah*

¹⁰ See *supra*, chapter II.

¹¹ Al-Juzjānī, pp. 189, 190. Khaliq Nizami (*The Life and Times of Shaikh Farīd-u'd-dīn Ganj Shakar*, p. 31, fn. 6) thinks that Nūr Turk was not an Ismā'ilī and that the attempted *coup d'état* was not organised by him. The difficulty in accepting his view arises from the fact that Nūr Turk was not the only Ismā'ilī to be praised by Sunni mystics. This difficulty arose because of the Ismā'ilī tradition of secret work. It is more probable that Nūr Turk kept his religious views secret from the mystics with whom he mixed. This would be an excellent method of working underground for seizing the government.

¹² See *supra*, chapters II and III.



power was utilised against its interests.¹³ The movements which were directed against laxity and corruption of doctrine by the orthodox had unfortunate repercussions upon the other sects. Thus there grew up traditions of ill-will between the orthodox on the one side and the other sects on the other. Then there was the rise of new sects from the body of Islam in the subcontinent; the measures adopted to deal with them left behind legacies of ill-will and suspicion. For several decades running into the reign of Akbar, the Mahdawīs were a source of conflict;¹⁴ in the later period considerable tension followed the growth of the Ahl-i-ḥadīth;¹⁵ the twentieth century has seen outbursts against the Qādiānīs.¹⁶ However, these differences, though by no means dead, became less acute as time passed. Out of the ranks of the Ismā'ilīs came leaders like Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Aga Khan III, the Ithnā Aṣharīs contributed among many others Ameer Ali, the Mahdawīs a man like the late Bahādur Yār Jang.¹⁷ A Qādiānī, Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, was Pakistan's representative when the first debates took place in the Security Council in connection with Kashmir and in him was found one of the ablest advocates of the Arab case for Palestine in the United Nations.¹⁸ In the 18th century, when the magnitude of the

¹³ This feeling was not unjustified because the Shī'ahs did not like the hold of orthodoxy upon the government. They were a minority among the Muslims of the subcontinent and established a tradition of allying themselves with the other groups which, like them, were in danger of being adversely affected by the government falling totally into the hands of the orthodox. The orthodox fear is well expressed in several letters of Sarhindi, e.g., I, Letter 46, pp. 64-66.

¹⁴ Erskine, II, pp. 475-482, has an excellent account of the Mahdawīs. Also see Abu-'l-Faḍl's account of his early life in the introduction to the *A'in-i-Akbari*, I, introduction.

¹⁵ This antagonism led to occasional breaches of the peace in Delhi. There are copious references to this ill feeling in all biographies of the Ahl-i-ḥadīth leaders like Shāh Ismā'il Shāhid.

¹⁶ The outbreak against the Qādiānīs had to be suppressed by the imposition of martial law in Lahore on 6 March 1953. Also see the *Report of the Punjab Disturbances Court of Enquiry*.

¹⁷ The references are to M. A. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, Aga Khan III, Syed Ameer Ali, the famous author of *The Spirit of Islam* (London, 1953), and to Bahādur Yār Jang, one of the leaders of the Pakistan movement from Hyderabad, after whom a new residential quarter has been named in Karachi. The first amplified edition of *The Spirit of Islam* was published in 1922.

¹⁸ Foreign Minister of Pakistan, 1947-1954; later a judge of the International Court at The Hague.



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Maratha danger was realized and, through the efforts of Shāh Wali-u'llah, a united front was forged, the Shī'ah Shujā'-u'd-dawlah joined the Rohillah Najib-u'd-dawlah against the common foe.¹⁹ The significance of this alliance becomes clear if it is realized that there had been long-standing hostility between the Rohillahs and the House of Oudh. In the rebellion of 1857 Sunni theologians and soldiers fought for the Shī'ah dynasty of Oudh.²⁰ Thus, despite internal tensions, it has been the tradition for the Muslims of various sects in the subcontinent to unite against a common danger, and this has developed a sense of loyalty to the community among its various sects.

Another factor in the growth of unity has been the development of the Indo-Muslim culture. This is not the place to give a cultural history of the community, but it is necessary to point out certain basic features, because without a common cultural outlook it is difficult to develop a community loyalty. There are some cultural differences among the Muslims which are based mostly upon geographical factors and history. In certain instances the differences are deep and it is difficult to foretell what will be their outcome in the course of time. There has, however, persisted a quality of unity throughout history despite the differences. The growth and nature of the unifying elements need some discussion.

Very early in their history the Muslims had developed the tradition of acquiring knowledge from the civilized peoples with whom they came into contact. Their debt to the learning of the Greeks is deep. In a previous chapter Arab interest in Hindu learning has been mentioned. When the Turks entered the subcontinent as conquerors, their cultural traditions had matured considerably. The court of Ghazni had become one of the centres of Islamic culture under the patronage of Sultān Maḥmūd.²¹ Though the impoverished Ghaznawid court at Lahore could not extend the same lavish patronage, yet the cultural traditions developed earlier were not forgotten

¹⁹ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 287.

²⁰ Mawlawī Aḥmad-u'llah Khān, the leading figure in the rebellion in Oudh, was a Sunni theologian; he is generally referred to simply as "the Moulvi" in British writings, e.g., MacMunn, pp. 210, 217, 247.

²¹ For details see *Browne*, II, chapter II.



and Lahore, because of the brilliance of its culture, became famous as one of the seats of learning and culture in the world of Islam. The significant feature of this cultural development was that Muslim poets and literati cultivated not only the polite Persian but also the native language called Hindwī. The famous Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān wrote three books of verse, one in Arabic, one in Persian and one in Hindwī.²² It is obvious that there must have been an audience to appreciate verse in three languages. The book of Hindwī verse is no longer available, but because of his Persian poetry, Mas'ūd is considered to be one of the recognized masters. This tradition of learning the native languages was never given up by the Muslims. The vernacular literatures of the different parts of the subcontinent received great impetus from the interest taken by the Muslims and the patronage extended by the Muslim courts. The greatest service that the Muslims rendered to the cultural and intellectual development of the subcontinent was that they liberated Hindu literature from the shackles of Sanskrit, which had been a dead language for several centuries, spoken nowhere, but still the repository of Hindu thought and learning. The Muslims, through their encouragement of the Prakritic languages, opened the flood-gates of creative thinking, and religious thought and poetry achieved not only popularity but also depth of feeling and richness of expression. The Muslims participated in this renaissance. Among the masters of Hindi poetry, some of the greatest and earliest names are those of Muslims. To mention but a few, Khusraw, Malik Muḥammad Jā'isī, Kabīr and 'Abd-u'r-Raḥīm Khān Khānān are considered to be some of the brightest stars in its firmament. The debt which the development of Bengali literature, one of the best developed literatures in the subcontinent, owes to the patronage of Muslim rulers is recognized by its historians.²³

Living in the midst of a population which did not know the languages spoken by them, the Muslims had to learn the

²² Al-'Awfī, chapter IX; Nizāmī-i-'Arūḍī-i-Samarqandī, Discourse II, Anecdote XVIII.

²³ See Keay, *A History of Hindi Literature*; Sen, Dinesh Chandra, pp. 10-14; Das Gupta, pp. 98-100; Al-'Umārī, p. 32, speaks of the official patronage of Hindi poetry.



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native languages to be able to conduct business or carry on the administration. This was also necessary because of the presence of native converts among them, whose progress in the official language could not but be slow. The missionaries and religious teachers soon discovered the need of mastering the local languages.²⁴ Gradually a mixture of the native and foreign languages became the *lingua franca* and came to be spoken in the Muslim homes as well. The official language and the vehicle of culture continued to be Persian; it was so under all the Muslim dynasties, whether Turkish, Afghan or native. The Turkish rulers kept up the tradition of a knowledge of Turkī, even the last Mughul rulers were able to speak it; the language of religion was Arabic; but the language of every-day use and of intimate communication became this mixture.

It gradually obtained recognition at the court as well and received the stamp of courtly politeness which it bears even today. It came to be known as Urdu, because the idiom used at the Mughul court (called Urdū-i-mu'allā) found general acceptance. It gradually became the language of polite intercourse and of poetry; ultimately it replaced Persian almost completely, though it maintained its close relationship with that language, so that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the two. If this sounds like an exaggeration, the critic should read the national anthem of Pakistan, which is written in Urdu, but most of which does not contain a single word that does not occur in Persian as well, and which, if given to an Iranian, will be recognized by him as belonging to his language. The reason for the bilingual nature of this poem, and indeed of many a line of Urdu poetry, is that Urdu retains much of the vocabulary of Persian and also the content and mannerisms of its poetic thought.²⁵ In addition, it uses some of the Persian grammatical forms freely; in particular where economy of

²⁴ There are many anecdotes in the *tadhkirahs* where the Sufis say something to their disciples in Hindi, e.g., when Shaikh Naṣir-u'd-dīn Chirāgh Dehlī sent his disciple Shaikh Sirāj-u'd-dīn 'Uthmān to Bengal and he showed some hesitation because there was already a famous shaikh working there, he was told that the latter would be under him. This remark was made by Shaikh Naṣir-u'd-dīn in Hindi (Firishtah, II, pp, 399, 400).

²⁵ Urdu and Persian prosody are not merely similar, they are identical. Similarly the similes and metaphors, the poetic conventions and the thought, all are common to both.



words is a necessity, the Persian combinations are most convenient.²⁶ However, Urdu is by no means identical with Persian. It has a syntax which is Prakritic in origin; to that extent its grammar is Indian. It has also borrowed many words from the same source without discarding words of Arabic, Persian or Turkic origin; to the extent of this borrowing it has deviated from Persian. It is obvious that this language is neither pure Prakrit nor pure Persian; it is a language which has arisen as the result of the mixture of foreign and native languages. The contributors to its literature have been mainly but not exclusively Muslims; among writers of the front rank there have been some Hindus as well. In its thought, however, it is saturated with Islamic and particularly Persian traditions. The metaphors and similes are Persian; the forms of verse are Persian; the prosody is Persian. As the Indian languages had sounds which do not occur either in Arabic or Persian, the Arabic script as used in Iran was modified further to represent the additional sounds which were adopted as the result of the incorporation of new native words.

This is symbolic as well as characteristic of the culture developed by the Muslims in the subcontinent. They did not discard their original culture. It continued to maintain the Islamic content which it had brought with it as well as the characteristics that the Muslims had picked up in the lands from which they came, but some Indian elements were also added. The Muslims of the subcontinent were no longer Arabs, Turks, Afghans or Iranians; they had developed a distinct character. This trend is present in almost every aspect of life. In some the Indian element is weak; in others it is strong, but it has left its impress everywhere. Its depth has also varied at different times and in different areas. In certain spheres it is extremely weak, even absent. For instance in orthodox doctrine there has been no compromise. Only the Ismā'ilis have sometimes made concessions for the converts, but at the higher level of theology, even Ismā'ilism has not made serious departures from its basic doctrines.

²⁶ The Persian *idāfah* comes in very handy because it is only a vowel sound in Persian, while Hindi syntax would require the addition of at least a word to convey the same idea.



Where the Islamic tradition was not strong, as in music, the Indian principles were accepted, but not without variation or modification. This is the reason why the revivers of the classical Hindu forms accuse great musicians like Tān Sen of having corrupted the Hindu tradition. There are many forms that the Muslims had to introduce because of the need to satisfy their craving for the simpler melodies of their older tradition. This was responsible for the development of *qawl*, popularly known as *qawwālī*, by Amīr *Khusraw*. The traditional Hindu music was *dhrupad*, "which was devotional in its aim, with its theme consisting normally of invocation to God, gods and goddesses, or describing incidents from Hindu scriptures".²⁷ These aims could not interest the Muslims; they had no truly devotional music. Some of the Sufis used music as an aid to create a feeling of ecstasy, but this was not in the form of prayers or invocation. The Muslim service is conducted without music; the only aesthetic strain, apart from the emotions of devotion, is provided by the eloquence and the rhythm of the Qur'ān, which, however, is chanted, not sung. The music that the Sufis utilized—and they were not unanimous on the propriety of using it—was lyrical and emotional but not invocatory. The Muslims required music for secular purposes and mostly for entertainment pure and simple. This had been their tradition and they wanted to press the native forms into service for that purpose. Sulṭān *Ḥusain* of the *Sharqī* dynasty of Jaunpur is credited with having modified the Hindu *dhrupad* for this purpose into *khayāl*, the Arabic word for fancy or imagination. In the words of a medieval writer, he "changed the melody, making it more cheerful... but he made the music more an expression of human love, and unless the interpreter is particularly pious, he cannot link this music with devotional themes".²⁸ The result was revolutionary; it has "for the last two hundred years and over almost monopolized the attention of the best musical brains".²⁹ This was a fundamental change; in course of time through the endeavour of eminent musicians, new melodies and forms were introduced and the face of Hindu music was

²⁷ Ikrām and Spear, p. 48.

²⁸ Lodī, p. 140.

²⁹ Ranade, *Hindusthani Music*, p. 127.



changed beyond recognition. The basic laws are the same, but so many variations have been introduced that the Muslims produced almost a new science out of what was really a part of devotional ritual. Being secular in nature and a source of entertainment it was taken up by the Hindus as well, though certain forms created by the Muslims, like *qawwālī* and *tarānah*, did not gain popularity among the Hindus. The acceptance of the basic Hindu principles of music took the Muslims away from the melodies that they had known in the lands from which they had migrated, though some of the strains remained alive in popular music as well as the innovations brought about by their master musicians. The greatest assimilation in the cultures of the Muslims and the Hindus took place in the realm of music, though here too the interests of the two communities were not identical.

The extent of the assimilation in the traditions of music was based upon a twofold process: the Muslims accepted the basic scales of Hindu music, which was a greater concession to the native principles than the Muslims made in any other sphere of culture; the Hindus accepted the innovations more unreservedly than they did Muslim contributions in any other field. Yet the Hindu and Muslim traditions did not become identical. There was the common ground of the scales and the appreciation of the secular strains introduced by the Muslims; but there were also particular fields where only one of the two communities was interested. For instance, in the really devotional music of the Hindus the Muslims were not interested. It is true that they had adopted for certain forms the romantic stories of the pranks played by Krishna with the maidens of Bindrāban, but this was only for their romantic and erotic appeal and not for any religious purpose. The Hindus were similarly not interested in the *qawwālī* which some of the Sufis used in their séances for producing a state of ecstasy. The music of the Hindu temple remained more attached to conventional patterns which did not appeal to the Muslims, though the innovations created by the Muslims sometimes, however surreptitiously and weakly, penetrated the sanctuaries of the gods as well. The *ghazal*, which was the form of lyrical poetry in Arabia, and in Iran and Central



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Asia after the penetration of the Arab influence, was and has remained popular with the Muslims, but it has never achieved the same popularity with the Hindu masses because the main vehicle for this form of poetry was Persian in the beginning and in later days polished Urdu with a large percentage of foreign words. Too often only the forms were identical, but not the spirit; there was too great a difference in the ideals of the two peoples to make identical moods in music equally acceptable to them.

This is true in other spheres as well. The Mughuls introduced new techniques in miniature painting and some of the best painters in that tradition were Hindus who were trained in the studio maintained at the imperial court.³⁰ The Mughul school was secular and courtly; sometimes interested in nature and life as such, but mostly concerned with the court and the nobles. The Hindus, after learning the new techniques, turned to religious and symbolical themes and produced the famous Rājput styles. Hindu mythological themes were too fertile a field to leave the Muslims absolutely cold, especially when genii and fairies still peopled the world of their imagination, yet they could not approach these subjects with the same reverence as did the Hindu painters and soon, despite the the apparent unity provided by the common technique, the Mughul and the Rājput schools of painting became as divergent as their traditions.³¹

By the time of the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi, the Muslims had developed in their own lands mature tradition of architecture.³² For historical and geographical reasons, the principle of construction was arcuate. They were fond of surface decoration, of geometrical motifs and patterns, of calligraphy as an important feature of ornamentation, of calligraphic flowing curves in their skylines and silhouettes, and of spacious and airy buildings. Domes and minarets mark the skyline of a characteristically Islamic city. The Hindus built on trabeate principles which, because of the use

³⁰ *Art in Pakistan* (Karachi, n.d.), pp. 11, 12; fuller notice is contained in Amjad Ali's chapter on "Painting" in Ikram and Spear, pp. 63-72.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72; also, Havell *A Handbook of Indian Art*, pp. 204-208.

³² *Vide* Qureshi, "Architecture" in Ikram and Spear, pp. 33 ff.



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of stone as the building material, prevented the coverage of large spaces without the obstruction of pillars; they believed in abundance of decoration; sculpture was an essential element in their architectural designs; they were inclined to sacrifice the clarity of the outline for the details of decoration.³³ There are two famous buildings in the South Indian city of Madurā. Both of them owe their existence to the building zeal of the same Hindu ruler. One of these is his palace, commonly called the Nāik's palace, and the other is the great temple of the city. The latter is in the traditional Hindu style, as it would have been built if the existence of the Muslim tradition in architecture had remained unknown to the builders; the former is a structure so Islamic in technique that, but for a Hindu trait here and there, it could have been built in a Muslim land. The palaces of Amber were deeply influenced by the Muslim tradition; though the edifices built by Akbar at Fatḥpūr Sikrī have overwhelmingly Hindu characteristics, even in that group the mosque is predominantly Muslim in spirit as well as execution. The mosques built in many areas did adopt Hindu decorative as well as tectonic features; similarly many temples borrowed Islamic methods and characteristics; however, in the realm of religious architecture the fusion was much less than in secular buildings. If architecture is an expression of a people's innermost aspirations and feelings, this tendency to preserve the peculiarities of Islamic and Hindu traditions is significant. It is true that architecture was also dependent upon the peculiar needs of the two communities, and these were even more different in the sphere of religion than in other areas of life because of the differences in the ritual. Islam was averse to polytheism as well as to images; in popular Hinduism, to whose needs the temples mostly catered, there were many gods and goddesses deserving worship and they were represented by images. However, this by itself would not have dictated differences in the ground plans of the mosques and the temples; the fact that Islam insisted upon congregational worship whereas in Hinduism worship was offered singly to the deity was more important. This should have resulted in different designs but not in two

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

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separate methods of construction; thus it was more a matter of loyalty to a tradition than of different needs.

There was greater fusion in secular architecture because, as the result of their association with the Muslim courts, the Hindu nobles began to adopt many Muslim fashions. They began to build palaces in the Muslim style, with only such differences as their distinctive needs demanded; for instance, the provision of a chapel or at least a niche for the image of the family deity, or the style of the kitchen where, unlike the Muslims, the Hindus took their meals to prevent the ceremonial pollution of their food. Thus a distinction did persist in spite of the fusion of the two traditions; the Muslim noble's house was not quite the same as the house of his Hindu counterpart. Even this much fusion did not penetrate the style of the more modest dwelling. Here the methods of construction were not so much at variance because these were often dictated by economy and the availability of material; the difference was more subtle, being dictated partly by the habits of the two communities and partly by differences in their psychology. The Muslim house was more open, less crowded and, in spite of insistence upon privacy, less exclusive in appearance; the Hindu house, for its size, had more chambers and rooms, and a smaller courtyard, its windows and doors were more securely barred; on the whole, it was darker and less airy; it looked secretive and forbidding. As the palaces were few and the humbler dwellings much more numerous, and because the temple and the mosque concerned the entire Muslim and Hindu communities, it was with their differences in architectural tradition that the populace came into greater contact.

The Muslim soldiers and officers as well as administrators and others who fanned out from Delhi carried with them the new language forged by them, the basic structure of which was borrowed from Hindi. Wherever they went, to the Deccan or to Gujrat, they learnt the languages of the people with whom they had to establish new contacts, but the intimate language of intercourse among themselves remained Urdu, except in the case of previously established Muslim com-



munities or local converts.³⁴ Urdu thus prospered and came to be understood at least by a section of the population even where the local languages remained the chief vehicles of communication. Thus through Urdu, in addition to Persian and to some extent Arabic, the idea of belonging to a single community prospered. Urdu, however, depended for the expression of many ideas upon the Perso-Arabic vocabulary, which was taken from Persian, the official language. Besides, the Muslims changed the pronunciation of many a local word, bringing it closer to their enunciation. Thus even at the popular level there started to grow up differences between Urdu and Hindi which were not merely a matter of vocabulary. Urdu became more popular and in course of time almost replaced Hindi as a spoken language. As a literary language, however, Hindi flourished and made great progress.³⁵ Many Muslim writers were drawn to it because of its capacity for expressing ideas which were more in keeping with the traditions and spirit of the Hindu environment and thus providing an exotic field of poetic expression. Unlike Hindu speculative philosophy, Hindi poetry was less sophisticated, more direct and rich in simile. These characteristics had a charm which did not fail to attract the Muslims, but there can be little doubt that writing Hindi poetry was a cultivated taste and did not answer the same urges as found expression in Persian and later in Urdu. The poetic content in Hindi is quite different from the thought and feeling incorporated in Urdu verse. Indeed Hindi and Urdu poetry are like two maidens, with entirely different upbringing, traditions and outlook upon life, dressed in different styles. The only common ground is provided by a

³⁴ Urdu prospered in the Deccan as a literary language earlier than elsewhere, the best known poets being Muhammad Qutbshāh, king of Golconda (1611-1625) and Wali (1668-1744) (Saksena, pp. 58, 59, 70). In general parlance the name Urdu is used retrospectively; this practice has been followed here as well.

³⁵ Hindi received a great impetus because of the Bhakti movement, many leaders of which used it for the expression of their devotional sentiments as well as for philosophy. One of the greatest poets of any language and of any time was Tulsī Dāsa the famous author of the *Rāmāyana* in Hindi which for several centuries was almost the Bible of many Hindu homes in Northern India, and which still commands respect and is recited as a religious text. Tulsī Dāsa was a contemporary of Jahāngir; see *infra*, chapter V.



similar, though not identical, grammatical structure. As there were Muslim writers in Hindi poetry, there grew up Hindu writers of Persian and Urdu poetry, but this did not bring about any fusion between the two traditions, which remained quite aloof and separate.

Apart from the encouragement which the Muslim courts generally extended to provincial literatures, the Muslims who settled down in those areas had to become proficient in the local languages. They, however, could not ignore Arabic, Persian, or even Urdu. Without a knowledge of Arabic, it would have been impossible to acquire any deep knowledge of Muslim theology, jurisprudence, or history; Persian was the official language and the chief repository of their culture; and Urdu was more and more becoming the *lingua franca* not only of the Muslims of the subcontinent but also for many others. As these languages were rich in the vocabulary of the Muslim lands, their words crept into the local languages used by the Muslims. Their use could not have been equally widespread among the non-Muslims, even though they used the same language. Besides, the Muslims had to express so many ideas that were relevant only to their way of life and beliefs that they had to mould the local languages to their needs. The Muslims had little need or urge to express notions peculiar to the Hindus, who, in their turn, were not interested in what was peculiar to Islam and Muslims. Therefore, where the Muslims adopted the provincial language, their idiom was different from the Hindu idiom, and the content of their thought was not the same. This trend has been showing signs of a change with the greater identification of some Muslims with their local cultures and the change is more marked in Bengali than in other languages. Mainly because of the interest taken in that language by men of such eminence as the late Rabindranath Tagore, Bengali came to have a much greater Hindi content than the fact of its being the language of such a large Muslim population would otherwise justify. The spoken language, as used by the masses, however, continues to have two different flavours, the Muslim and the Hindu.

These facts would show that the Muslims tended to



preserve their communal identity wherever they happened to find themselves in the subcontinent. This tendency was encouraged by their adherence to a legal system based upon their religion whether they lived under Muslim rule or in the dominions of some Hindu sovereign; this preserved their mores and made the influence of the *'ulamā* more potent than it would have been otherwise. Their religious terminology always remained non-Hindi, except for the *Ismā'ilis* who adopted some native terms. Culture is rooted in life; because the main currents of life remained different, cultures also did not become identical.

As to the Hindus, the degree to which they came to accept the Indian Muslim culture depended upon the nature of their contact with the Muslims. Within the towns relations became cordial as the result of association. The Muslim rulers gave encouragement to trade and commerce,³⁶ and the commercial classes of the Hindus were ready to accept any strong government which, by imposing peace and order, made business prosperous and fruitful. Again those classes who took employment in Muslim government service adopted Muslim culture: thus the *Kāyasthas* in Delhi and the upper reaches of the Gangetic plain came to be popularly dubbed as half-Muslims, not because they had compromised their religious beliefs, but because, to some extent, they had adopted the Muslim pattern of cultural life.

The rural population was more slowly influenced. The Muslim community started life in many areas as an armed camp in the midst of a hostile population, which they dominated from the towns. At all times the sense of integration between urban and rural populations has been weak in the subcontinent: this weakness was accentuated by the foreignness of the Muslims in the towns. In times of crisis and anarchy the rural population would try to sack or plunder the towns or to interrupt communications by waylaying travellers.³⁷

³⁶ The earliest instructions issued to the governors included an injunction to "guard the highways, encourage trade and protect traders". This was done by *Qutb-u'd-din Aibak*, *Ḥasan Nizāmī*, ff. 144b-148b.

³⁷ This has been an oft repeated story during every breakdown in the authority of the government. In normal times as well, peace was maintained in the rural areas by imposing joint responsibility upon the villages and their headmen (*Qureshi*, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli*, pp. 214, 215).



However, Muslim rulers were well aware that the prosperity and solvency of the state depended upon the contentment of the peasants, and their efforts to improve agriculture and protect the peasants led in course of time to better relations between the Muslims and the peasantry.³⁸

The main class which continued hostile to Muslim rule was that of the Hindu chiefs.³⁹ Some, it is true, were willing to cooperate and were well rewarded if they did so. Others, however, never forgot that the Muslims had deprived them of political power, and since they could rely upon the assistance of their numerous clansmen, dependents and hereditary supporters, they could not easily be isolated or suppressed. Those who rejected the association with Muslim rule, and stood out for the restoration of Hindu power and glory, often earned great popularity. However, with this exception, relations between the Muslims and the local population generally became more friendly. It was in the interest of the government to reconcile the people, and Muslim rulers consciously tried to build bridges between themselves and their non-Muslim subjects.⁴⁰ The work of the rulers was made easier by the Sufis and the *Bhaktas*, who attached greater importance to the esoteric values of religion than to ritual. The Muslims were not unappreciative of many features of Hindu culture. Apart from the polemics in which missionary religions have to indulge for the propagation of their beliefs, many Muslim writers have treated Hinduism with sympathy and respect.⁴¹

But whatever degree of working toleration developed between the communities, the Indo-Muslim culture remained basically Islamic and mostly Islamic and Central Asian in spirit. There might be some intermixture of local traditions, sufficient, indeed, to make the Muslims of the subcontinent a distinct community in the world of Islam. (They are closest to the Iranians and Central Asians, so close indeed that after a lapse of centuries there are still a surprisingly large number

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-206.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-229.

⁴¹ Al-Biruni's *Kitāb-u'l-Hind* is one of the best expositions of Hinduism.



of common characteristics). But at all times the Muslims of the subcontinent were resolute in refusing to be assimilated to the local population and made conscious efforts to maintain their distinct character.⁴² In view of the great assimilative qualities of Hinduism, which has absorbed within its bosom many a foreign community, this needed constant vigilance and effort. The continuity of such an effort is in itself a great cementing force. The Muslims of the subcontinent emerged as a distinct entity because they developed a separate culture and well-defined aims and ideals; they were a part of the large mass of the Muslim peoples of the world, fully conscious of this fact and attaching the highest importance to it, but they formed a well-defined group within the brotherhood of Islam; they belonged to a habitat, which affected their tastes and manners, but with which they refused to identify themselves so completely as to lose their distinctive qualities; they were a people living, as it were, in two worlds; one was that of their immediate surroundings and the other was the world of the sources of inspiration which sustained their spiritual existence.⁴³ This has given them that psychological and emotional complexion which has directed their behaviour throughout the course of history.

⁴² Qureshi, "The Foundations of Pakistani Culture", *The Muslim World*, January 1954.

⁴³ Mohamed Ali said in the Round Table Conference: "I belong to two circles of equal size but which are not concentric. One is India and the other is the Muslim world." *Indian Round Table Conference* (12 November 1930—19 January 1931), p. 123.



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V

A Perilous Triumph

The period of Rājput rule in North India had been remarkably sterile. During the time that the South had been bristling with new ideas, the North had been in a state of inertia; religious, artistic and intellectual activities had all lost their creative quality, and, therefore, this era is not brightened by any great names. The alliance between the Brahmins and the Rājputs had succeeded in rooting out heresy and deviation from orthodoxy, but in this process it had also killed initiative of every kind.

The Muslim conquerors of North India are sometimes accused by Hindu authors of having destroyed a thriving culture and its creations, but this is not correct because there was not much to destroy. In the plains of the Indo-Gangetic basins buildings were constructed mostly of bricks and timber, which could be maintained for a long period only by constant repairs. Even where stone was available easily, it could not be had in pieces of sufficient length to enable the Hindu builders to utilize it effectively for their trabeate methods of construction. The excessive moisture during the monsoons and the lack of humidity in the hot and dry season preceding it expose even more solid edifices to such a strain that their

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lives are shortened; buildings built with less lasting materials could not have lasted for long. The Muslims did demolish a number of temples in the first flush of victory, but they were not sufficiently organized to destroy every temple that existed, even if they had wanted to do so. The uninhibited statements of the Muslim chroniclers, when put together and examined closely, do not give a picture of any wholesale destruction. In a few towns, where the resistance had been desperate, a few temples were destroyed, but the instances of such resistance are not too many, otherwise the Muslims could not have brought such a large area under their control with such speed. The Muslim conquerors could not have been interested in the demolition of palaces and other secular buildings; if there had been any, there was no reason why they should not have been preserved or at least permitted to exist;¹ they should have found mention in the writings of chroniclers and travellers; the archaeologist's spade would have brought them to light during the British period. The truth seems to be that the Rājput kingdoms were poor in their architectural achievements. Even such areas as have a tradition of the continuity of Hindu rule in North India do not boast of any great buildings; Chamba, hidden away in the Himalayas, has small temples built in the traditional Rājput style; a few miles from Udaipur there are temples which have never been desecrated by any Muslim conqueror; the examples can be multiplied; but there is no Madurā or Shrirangam among them. What is true of architecture is true of other fields of artistic and religious activity. This was a period of little achievement and progress; stagnation was the hallmark of Hindu society in North India at the time of the Muslim conquest.

Religion was at the root of this stagnation. It had become a matter of superstition and ritual. The flight of human imagination and thought which was responsible for giving the world one of its richest systems of speculative philosophy

¹ E.g., Firūz Shāh brought Ashoka's pillars to the capital and fixed them at prominent places ('Afif, pp. 305-315); the stones out of several temples went to make the comparatively small section of the Qubbat-u'l-Islām mosque which was constructed in the 13th century (*Cambridge History of India*, III, p. 516). Delhi is on a spur of the Aravalli range which has provided solid granite to its imperial builders.



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had long been dormant when the Muslims established themselves in the North; the Brahmins were still able to explain to Al-Bīrūnī the main traditions of their philosophy and law, but they had ceased to think on new lines. How different was this from the dynamism of the South where minds were still active and capable of accepting new thoughts and rethinking the old ones! At the popular level religion was just a matter of dead ritual followed because of fear or the hope of some reward, not coloured by any emotion except that of the propitiation of the deity. The ritual was not only lifeless but sometimes also exacting and even harsh.² That emotional satisfaction which is at the root of worship and devotion in all religious life was absent. The higher aspects of Hindu philosophy were capable of holding their ground in argument, but the brand of Hinduism which came to fill the life of the people under the Rājapūts was extremely vulnerable to rational attack. It lacked the qualities of emotion and reason alike; its only strength lay in the loyalty of its adherents. Of this it had plenty, because it had been the only way of life known to the people for centuries. On the intellectual side the idolworship and the animism of the common people could be defended only as a means of satisfying the religious urges of the ignorant, as indeed they were by the exponents of Hindu philosophy. The difficulty, however, lay in the fact that the masses are not devoid of common sense; they are able to see the fallacy in such an argument if it is explained to them. For a select few idol-worship might have been an aid to concentration; for the masses the difference between the power and the symbol, designed to represent it, was extremely thin; the popular mind identified the deity with its image. It was to the image that the common

² The penances prescribed for some lapses were extreme; so were exercises like keeping an arm lifted in the air above the head until it lost its power of movement and became useless. This latter was for a class of ascetics. There were other forms of penances and exercises which were just as harsh, for instance, those which dealt with the breaking of the caste rules, Jagjivan Das, born in East Uttar Pradesh in 1682, says:

What is the use of mortification before five fires, of wearing skins, Of standing with face turned upwards or sitting in smoke or giving up the use of salt.

What is the value of sitting and standing or of keeping silence and repeating the names?

These are all references to various penances and exercises of self-mortification (Jagjivan, *Shabdavali*, II, p. 38).



man directed his prayers; it was the image which gathered superstition around itself, partly because it is a common fallacy to think that the symbol of a deity should share with it supernatural powers and partly because it is a practice with all guardians of temples and shrines to circulate pious but fraudulent fables about them.

Islam's main attack was directed against idol-worship and polytheism. The shock of Hindu kingdoms falling before the onslaught of the Muslim fighters in itself must have been great. Though a defeated population need not accept the superiority of the beliefs of the conquerors, yet the demolition of a temple demonstrates the helplessness of the presiding image in a devastating manner, because if the images are considered to be potent in punishing their enemies and rewarding their friends, it is a sad commentary on their power in the eyes of the superstitious that they should so mutely suffer destruction. The fallacy inherent in such an argument is clear only to those who do not associate supernatural powers with images and buildings and look upon them as sacred, not because they have any inherent power in themselves, but because they are associated with some one who has it. The first argument that the Muslims advanced against idol-worship was the violent one of the demolition of some temples. It is said that when Maḥmūd of Ghazni had despoiled some temples in North India the priests of the Somnāth temple spread the rumour that the Hindus of the North had suffered defeats because of their neglect of the Moon-god, the deity of their temple.³ Maḥmūd marched against Somnāth and exposed the hollowness of that claim. Such events are not entirely without effect. All the conversions which followed the fall of some sacred town could not have been merely to please the conquerors; many must have lost faith in deities which proved helpless against the onslaught of the invader.

³ *History of Hind Pakistan* (Karachi, 1955), p. 107. Firishah, I, p. 32, has a slightly different version. The priests said that the idols of North India had been punished because Somnāth was displeased with them. When the Muslim army reached the outskirts of the town, the Hindu populace crowded over the ramparts and mockingly said: "Somnāth has brought these men so that he may punish them for the destruction of the idols in the North" (*ibid*). It is significant that Somnāth temple was rebuilt soon after India achieved independence and the head of the state presided over the rites of dedication.



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The Muslim polemics against idolatry were unrelenting, merciless and vigorous. The argument was pushed through debate as well as song.⁴ Such continuous propagation of the Muslim point of view bore fruit. Hinduism was in no position to resist because idolatry is not easy to reconcile with its own higher philosophy. The more intellectual schools of Hinduism believe in an impersonal God and find it difficult to defend the worship of the lesser deities. A belief in the power of images is almost impossible to justify. For these reasons Hinduism is capable of understanding and accepting the arguments advanced against idolatry, however well established it may be in its system. Muslim pleadings gradually began to find a response in Hindu hearts. The Muslims did not leave unattacked even the argument that idol-worship was only an aid in worshipping the True God. Islam also attacked the doctrine of the incarnation of God in human or other forms; a corollary of this attitude was the rejection of the divine nature of any gods, whether incarnations, symbols, forces of nature, spirits or phenomenal objects. The insistence was on monotheism, absolute and uncompromising. Hindu philosophy does not only believe in monotheism in the final resort, but also denies, according to certain schools, pluralism. If according to many Hindu thinkers even Brahmā is impersonal, and the only reality is God and all else is illusion, if even *Īshvara*, the supreme reflection of human ideas and desires, is an illusion,⁵ it is not difficult to come to believe that the gods and the goddesses are mere illusions and as such hardly deserve worship.

If there had been no room in Hinduism for the acceptance of the ideas put forward so vigorously by Islam, the result would have been total rejection or total acceptance. This would have led to conversion in some instances and the pursuit of the old ways of belief and worship among others. There was,

⁴Here is a translation of a popular Gujrati song:

They are helpless, mute and deaf,
Why worship idols? O my brothers,
You can move, hear and speak,
You are far more potent, O my brothers,
Why worship idols, O my brothers?
(*Begānah Shāh*, p. 10).

⁵ See, *supra*, Chapter I, fn. 48.



however, a body of opinion which was inclined to accept the contentions of Islam without giving up their allegiance to the faith of their forefathers. There was much in the popular and even accepted forms of Hinduism which they were willing to reject, but they were not ready to join the Muslim community as converts. These were the people who exercised, in their turn, great influence upon the development of Hinduism and on its relations with Islam. In this group there were several sections, depending upon how far they were ready to assimilate the beliefs propounded by Islam. In a way the condition of belief prevalent among the various sections of the people, apart from the nature of these beliefs, was also a factor. Those whose loyalty, whether enlightened or otherwise, was weak did not seek a *via media* between their faith and Islam. These sections, if they were convinced of the truth of Islam, were converted without much difficulty. The only hindrance was the social system of Hinduism which required the disruption of all family bonds with the converts and this, in any case, is a hard price to pay but, it was even more difficult for a Hindu nurtured upon the loyalties inherent in the joint family system, because in this system the individuality of the member is subordinated to the good of the extended family. Sometimes this led to the acceptance of the doctrines of Islam or some of them without conversion. The larger number of such people, however, would come from the group which thought that the teachings of Islam were capable of being integrated into Hinduism without disrupting it.

The nature of belief also was a factor. Where the belief was enlightened or inherently not corrupt, assimilation of foreign ideas might be possible, but where there had been distortion or corruption, assimilation would be difficult. For instance there could be no assimilation between the austere beliefs of Islam and the ideas of the Vāmamārgīs who indulged in sexual orgies as an act of worship.⁶ Here there could be only total rejection or total acceptance; though partial acceptance of Islamic ideas could come through conversion not to Islam but to some other sect. Similarly where superstition and not enlightenment was characteristic, it would be difficult

⁶ Hodivala, p. 342; also, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, II, p. 215.



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to affect the ideas of the people to any appreciable degree. As a matter of fact such superstition did not disappear invariably even after conversion to Islam; it sometimes only found new avenues of expression. The part played by conversions in the formation of the Muslim community has been discussed earlier; now it is intended to discuss the influence which Islam exercised in North India upon the religious thought of the Hindus.

It has been seen that the emergence of Islam in South India had deeply influenced Hindu thought before the establishment of Muslim rule in the North. Here it is necessary to recall that Rāmānuja's teachings and philosophy betray Islamic influence.⁷ Through a line of disciples, another famous man, Rāmānanda was connected with him. It is difficult to determine how many generations of teachers had elapsed between the two because Rāmānanda's dates are uncertain. One tradition puts his birth in 1299,⁸ but this seems to be impossible in view of other evidence. The dates of his death given by other writers vary by as much as half a century or more; even the earliest would give him a life of 112 years. The more acceptable view is that his career lay "in the last quarter of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth centuries".⁹ He was born at Prayāg, the ancient Allahabad, and was educated at his native town and Benares, the centre of Hindu learning. He started with a teacher who was a vedantist and a monist; later he joined the sect founded by Rāmānuja. Thus the Muslim trends present in the teachings of the South Indian teacher were absorbed by him; these seem to have been strengthened by contacts with the Muslims, because, according to Macauliffe, "it is certain that Rāmānanda came in contact at Benares with learned Musalmāns".¹⁰ He was deeply impregnated with the doctrine of Bhakti; he perhaps saw difficulties in the way of creating feelings of devotion for a being removed from the common experience of man and therefore replaced Viṣṇu by his incarnation Rāma in his system. The hero of the *Rāmāyana*

⁷ See *supra*, Chapter I.

⁸ *The Central Heritage of India*, II, 249-251.

⁹ Zutshi, p. 49.

¹⁰ Macauliffe, VI, p. 102.



was known to the people through Vālmiki's work and also through popular lore. His other reform was the removal of caste distinctions in the admission of disciples to his system.¹¹ This seems to have been borrowed directly from the Muslim idea of the equality of all men and their common capacity for spiritual progress. These are not radical reforms in the system established by Rāmānuja, and Rāmānanda would have been forgotten by posterity but for his influence over great followers like Tulsī Dāsa and Kabīr.

The Sufi saints, as also the Ismā'īlis, had adopted the practice of admitting to their circle non-Muslims, partly in the hope of ultimately influencing them to such an extent that they might become Muslims and perhaps even more in the hope of bringing about a moral revolution in their lives even though they did not come to believe in Islam. There were many instances of Hindus becoming disciples of Muslim religious teachers. One reads of such association between some mystics of Islam and Hindu searchers for the richness of a spiritual life. Rāmānanda is said to have accepted a Muslim as a disciple. It is difficult to think of this as a deliberate reform because the legend says that he admitted Kabīr as the result of a successful ruse by the latter. However, it is difficult to place much reliance upon such legends. Indeed recent research has created grave doubts about Kabīr having ever met Rāmānanda. Through Kabīr and Tulsī Dāsa flowed two streams, one very near Islam if not quite Islamic in its essence, and the other conservative and essentially Hindu.

Immersed in the Hindu tradition and at peace with his Hindu environment, Tulsī Dāsa's feelings of devotion found expression in a poetic version of the story of Rāma. His book breathes piety, deep religious emotion and compassion; the Islamic influence can be traced only in some of the ethical concepts and the deep undercurrent of emotional devotion, which have come indirectly through infiltration into the doctrines of the line of teachers beginning with Rāmānuja and coming down to Rāmānanda. There seems to be no conscious borrowing. This was perhaps in the true spirit of the teachings of Rāmānanda. Tulsī Dāsa did not feel called upon to

¹¹ Zutshi, pp. 49, 50.



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act as a crusader in the cause of any reform because his contribution was made in a positive manner, without criticising what he found well-established in society. He seems to be unconcerned with the world around himself; he is so deeply immersed in his own emotions that the world hardly exists for him to be reformed. This spirit is the mainstay of conservatism; it adds to the strength of things as they are; and yet it has a role in the reformation of religious belief because it diverts the mind from the error to the deeper verities. Tulsī Dāsa did reform Hindu religious life by emphasizing spiritual values and giving solace and comfort to the hearts of the devotees, but he did not address himself to the removal of inequality or error.¹²

It is not certain how much influence Rāmānanda had upon Kabīr. To judge from his works, the influence seems to have been small. There is no certainty that Kabīr came directly into contact with Rāmānanda because, apart from the doubts in Rāmānanda's chronology, Kabīr's dates are obscure as well. The dates of his birth given by different authors vary from 1398 to 1440; similarly the date of his death is given by some as 1492 and by others as 1518. Even if the legend of association between Rāmānanda and Kabīr is accepted, it would seem to point to lasting at the utmost for three or four years.¹³ It is only in Kabīr's earlier life that this association is mentioned; later Rāmānanda does not find mention in association with Kabīr.¹⁴

It is doubtful if Kabīr accepted all that Rāmānanda had to teach him because his was a restless soul, sensitive to the environment, questioning the validity of what was taken for granted and seeking light and guidance from wherever he thought he could find it. Perhaps it was his origin which created this tendency. He was the child, it is said, of a Brahmin widow who abandoned him on the bank of a tank in Benares, where he was picked up by a Muslim weaver couple who adopted him and taught him their trade. They were poor and did

¹² For a notice of Tulsī Dāsa, see *The Cultural Heritage of India*, II, pp. 253, 254. He was born long after Kabīr and was a contemporary of the Emperor Jahāngīr (1605-1627).

¹³ Keay, *A History of Hindi Literature*, p. 22; Wilson, *The Religious Sects of the Hindus*, p. 38; Chand, pp. 146, 147.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148.



not have much to offer to the child except affection and a home. It seems that the circumstances of his birth were known to him as well as to his playmates, whose unkind remarks created a habit of brooding in the child. Benares was a religious and intellectual centre where the doctors of the Hindu faith were engaged in teaching and discussion; Muslim men of learning also were resident in the city because they must have found it necessary to understand Hinduism to refute its teachings more successfully in their missionary effort. Kabir's impressionable mind must have taken note of the differences between the Muslims and the Hindus in their religious beliefs and practices. He must have asked himself if it was a good thing that he had been picked up by Muslim foster parents, he being born of a Hindu. The injustice of a code which forbade the mother from bringing up her own child may have impressed itself upon his mind. He might have decided to find out for himself whether he had gained by having been brought up as a Muslim, or whether it would have been better for him if he had remained a Hindu. He could do this only by contacting those who understood these matters because his foster parents were humble people, not knowing much about their own religion, even less about Hinduism. He must, therefore, try to find out something about Hinduism from a Hindu teacher.

It was probably this urge which took him early in life to Rāmānanda or one of his disciples. It was impossible for a fair mind to come into touch with a saintly teacher of eminence and not to see merit in his views and teachings; it was a different matter to accept them totally. Kabir says that he was awakened by Rāmānanda; by which he perhaps means that Rāmānanda's teachings drew his attention to the esoteric and spiritual side of religion, to the irrelevance of his search because his calling himself a Muslim or a Hindu was not so important as his spiritual attainments.¹⁵ Any other teaching would not have been called awakening by Kabir. He seems to have accepted this basic concept because it remained fundamental in the development of his thought; he, however, does

¹⁵ "I was born in Benares and awakened by Rāmānanda", quoted by Zutshi, p. 56; cf. Keay, *A History of Hindi Literature*, p. 23.



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not seem to have been fully satisfied with the other teachings of Rāmānanda; or at least he wanted to pursue his quest further, because he then went to other ascetics and teachers. Of course he must have acquired, as tradition says, a good knowledge of the fundamentals of Hindu religion and philosophy from Rāmānanda's school.

He went to Muslim teachers now and even to the university town of Jaunpur, where he listened to lectures in Muslim theology; with what interest is not known, because he does not betray any profound knowledge of that subject. Perhaps he did not feel interested in the hair-splitting of the teachers, for Islamic theology has long been mixed up with jurisprudence. He found the teachings of the Sufis from whom he sought enlightenment more to his taste. At last he felt that he had served his apprenticeship because his ideas were crystallized into beliefs and convictions. His earlier contacts with the Hindu teachers had not been in vain because he could see the conflict between Hinduism and Islam in better perspective; but most of his inspiration came from Islam. This did not create any blind loyalties in him because he did not believe in forms or rituals if they did not add to a man's spiritual and moral stature. Religion perforce must lay emphasis upon conformity and ritual because otherwise it would lose the advantages obtained from the creation of an environment which sustains the spirits of those who are not sufficiently enlightened to discover the spirit behind the externals; besides, ritual and externals of religion create the moulds through which the spirit flows; but, in the last analysis, it is the spirit that matters; without the spirit forms are dead and sometimes even meaningless; without spirit religion is reduced to mere Pharisaism. Kabir was emphatic in exposing the weaknesses which arise in popular faith if the spirit departs. His criticism of the blind and meaningless pursuit of ritual and external requirements in Islam was uncompromising and incisive, but nowhere does he question its fundamentals or teachings.

In his criticism of Hinduism he attacked teachings which, whatever he might have thought of them, are fundamental. Kabir condemned the caste system with its concomitants of



untouchability and restrictions against eating what was touched by those considered unclean and even those who were looked upon as less clean; he preached against idol-worship and polytheism in any form; he rejected the idea of incarnation. He adopted the popular word Rāma for God, but his Rāma had nothing to do with the hero of the *Rāmāyana* and the incarnation of Viṣṇu. He said explicitly: "The Creator did not marry Sītā nor did He make a stone bridge across the waters.¹⁶ They say the Lord of the world finding inequalities of the weak and the strong came as Rāma. But Kabīr says, before such a one, who took birth and died, I cannot bend my head....¹⁷ The ten incarnations the people talk about do not concern me; they are merely the reapers of the fruits of their actions, but the Creator is some one else".¹⁸ Actually it is difficult to find out what it was in Hinduism which he considered to be true, yet he does not reject it in so many words. Even metempsychosis, which is the basic idea in all the ancient schools of thought which have risen from the bosom of Hinduism, does not appeal to him because the soul "will not come a second time".¹⁹

Perhaps with his supreme indifference to doctrine he did not mind if the beliefs of Hinduism in the social and philosophical spheres were unacceptable to him; he was more concerned with the spiritual purpose of religion and the quest of God which was inherent in that purpose and he did not find Hinduism devoid of it; on the other hand, he seems to be impressed with the sincerity of many within its fold who, like himself, were so engrossed in the cultivation of the spirit that errors in doctrine seemed to be irrelevant. Fundamentally this was a typically Hindu attitude because Hinduism concerns itself primarily with action and not so much with belief. In the adoption of this attitude, and this was fundamental, he was a Hindu, saturated to the core with the conviction of the irrelevancy of belief if it did not affect the actions of the believer. Of

¹⁶ Kabīr, *Bijak*, *shabda* 8, pp. 108, 109; also, Prem Chand's translation of *Bijak*, p. 9; his rejection of the fundamentals of Hinduism, Barth, p. 239.

¹⁷ Kabīr, *Sākhī*, Avatar kā Anga; Prem Chand's translation, pp. 14, 53.

¹⁸ Sen, *Collection of Hymns*, II, p. 37.

¹⁹ Kabīr, *Bijak*, *shabda* 10, p. 212.



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course he was not so blind to the relationship between belief and action as not to lay down his own dicta on what he conceived to be fundamental, otherwise we would never have known his views.

Except in this important respect, it is difficult to see how he was a Hindu. He does not claim to be a Muslim in so many words, but his beliefs are those of a Muslim mystic. Even outwardly he did not leave the fold ostensibly. His son was called Kamāl, a typically Muslim name like that of Kabīr himself. His writings and views are those generally accepted by many Sufis. Kabīr believes in monism, *waḥdat-u'l-wujūd*, in a God simultaneously transcendent and immanent, the latter not as a first principle or a force, but as a conscious being, the immanence of the type conveyed in the Qur'ānic simile of God being nearer the man than his own jugular vein; he borrows the Qur'ānic simile of God being light; he sings with rhapsodical fervour of the ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad, utilizing the theme for describing the reward of spiritual progress, the joy of coming face to face with reality, a realization of the truth which can never come through books.²⁰ He does not dismiss the methods of worship prescribed by Islam; he says only that they are meaningless if they remain merely outward actions without any spiritual significance or elevation. Indeed it would be difficult to find in his teachings or philosophy much deviation from the views of many Sufis who also demanded the cultivation of the spirit, not through a superficial performance of a ritual, but through a deep and significant transformation. He has borrowed extensively from them.

It is not his thought which is different; the mode of expression is unfamiliar. The reason is that he is addressing himself to people more familiar with the Hindu ideas in a language, Hindi, which had not picked up the terminology of the Sufis. At places he could express himself by paraphrasing passages from the writings of the Sufis in Hindi, but when he had to convey a thought which was unfamiliar to the Hindus, it had to be translated into already familiar concepts even though it meant borrowing from Hindu cosmogony, mythology or philosophy. When concepts are translated in this manner

²⁰ Kabīr, *Siddhānta-dīpika*, p. 10 ff.



misconceptions are likely to arise because then basic ideas are approached through inadequate parallels. In any case this was a pioneer attempt and it faced all the difficulties inherent in such efforts; they were aggravated by the fact that Kabir was not learned. He had never been subjected to the discipline of formal schooling; his reactions were more emotional than intellectual, and it would be idle to expect the precision and logic of a theologian, jurist or philosopher in his writings. The fact, however, remains that except for his general attitude towards belief as such, his ideas and concepts are those of a Muslim mystic and not those of a Hindu.

This, however, was not his claim. He compared Islam and Hinduism to two boughs of a tree; his ideas he compared to the trunk which shoots up from in between.²¹ What was this middle shoot, this trunk, which was the truth for him? It was the essence of religion, a true concept of God, which was Muslim and not Hindu; devotion to Him, which could be common to the two faiths; and a spiritual and ethical attitude towards life, Kabir's conception of which was, once again, more Islamic than Hindu. Where he differed from the popular Muslim point of view was in his attitude towards Hinduism. Here also it was a matter of degree and intensity of feelings alone. There have been Muslims who did not deny that Hinduism had its share of truth and spiritual fervour, but they did not believe in this with such conviction and passion. They had a feeling of superiority; Kabir was not unaware of the weaknesses and errors in popular Hinduism; he also rejected some of the basic concepts of higher Hindu philosophy; all this, however, did not create in him the feeling of superiority or self-righteousness. If Hinduism had its errors of belief, Islam also was reduced by many to an empty formalism; he, therefore, did not feel justified in condemning the one without reproaching the other. He even went further and preached the equality of all right religious endeavour, under whatever name it was made. He tried to say to the Hindus and the Muslims in effect: "Those among you who understand the true function and significance of religion and try to follow it sincerely are pursuing the same ideals; your paths are not so

²¹ Kabir, *Sākhī*, Madhya kā Anga, p. 183; Chand, p. 150.



different as you imagine; therefore, unite in following the ideals which both of you hold dear. I am in a position to give you this advice because I have not identified myself with either of you completely."

Kabir did not express his views merely because he had such strong feelings about them that he could not keep them to himself; he had a positive sense of mission.²² He wanted to make spiritual values more popular and to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity by uniting them on the spiritual plane. He did not want to achieve this through the annihilation of any religion or the establishment of yet another; his method was simply to clarify the real purpose of religious life, which he considered to be spiritual uplift. From this it follows that he was not an eclectic; he did point out what he considered to be erroneous, but he did not create a new system of belief by bringing together doctrines of differing creeds. In the matter of abstract doctrine there is little doubt that he was a Muslim Sufi, as can be easily demonstrated by an analysis of his beliefs. Nor did he believe in the truth of every religion in all its details; he would not say all paths are the same; he does say that there are true beliefs and false beliefs. The standard which he applied in judging the validity of belief seems to have been definitely Islamic; he differed from Islam in assessing the importance of belief if divorced from action. Was he then a Muslim trying to win over the Hindus to Islam by subverting their faith? Nothing seems to be farther from the truth because throughout his life he maintained an attitude of indifference towards conversion; moreover, his philosophy is incompatible with a desire for the formal conversion of others. His target was, to borrow Gandhi's terminology, vertical and not horizontal conversion. It was an effort to separate the concept of religion from the concept of community, an appeal to accept truth wheresoever it was found and not to reject it merely because it was part of the beliefs of a different community. It was also an appeal not to confine truth within the barriers of race or community. In his words: "The Hindu and the Turk have one path which the true teacher

²² Kabir, *Siddhānta-dīpikā*, Ādi Mangal, pp. 1-3; also, Wilson, *The Religious Sects of the Hindus*, p. 55.



has pointed out; says Kabīr, hear, ye saints, say Rāma or say Khudā".²³ It was he who exploited the similarity between the sounds of the words Rāma and Raḥīm in the furtherance of his views and said that the two were one, meaning to say that the Hindus and the Muslims worshipped the same God.

These views were so startling that both the Muslims and the Hindus were angered and the matter was taken before that pillar of orthodoxy, Sulṭān Sikandar Lodī. And it is a remarkable testimony to the essentially Islamic nature of Kabīr's views that the sultan saw nothing objectionable in them and merely advised him to go away to some place so that popular resentment both among the Hindus and the Muslims should die out.²⁴ Apostasy would have been the last crime to have been tolerated by the sultan. Another significant feature of this episode was that the complainants were both Hindus and Muslims; both felt that their faith was being subverted. By the time Kabīr died he had gathered around himself a sizable body of disciples who carried on his work after him. Even today his following has not died out and is divided into two groups, the Hindu and the Muslim, each holding that Kabīr belonged to its religion.

Kabīr holds an important place in the history of the religious thought of the subcontinent because through him was articulated most forcefully and with greatest effect the belief that Hinduism and Islam could unite in a fervent belief in God and that the division on the basis of community, ritual or theology was not important. The torch lit by Kabīr ignited in course of time a wild fire which, carried upon the emotions of sincere seekers of spiritual ecstasy, spread to all corners of the subcontinent. Among his many disciples was his own son Kamāl, who seems to have inclined even more towards the Muslim Sufis than his father. Similarly, Dādū (1544—1603) was also deeply influenced by Sufi ideas and he uses a large number of Arabic and Persian terms borrowed from the Islamic mystic literature. He goes even farther than Kabīr in the acceptance of Islamic doctrines and the Sufi

²³ Kabīr, *Bijak*, shabda 10.

²⁴ Chand, p. 149. The legendary stories given by Macauliffe (VI, pp. 132, 133) are so full of the supernatural that they must be rejected.



methods of spiritual discipline. He also condemns in no uncertain terms polytheism in any shape, idol-worship, belief in gods and goddesses, the theory of the incarnation of God in any form, metempsychosis, and caste.²⁵ To him God was light, perfection, effulgence; He was the Creator Who by a word created all out of nothing; immortal, unchangeable, eternal, incomprehensible; even Brahmā failed to have full vision of Him.²⁶ He saw no difference between the Hindus and the Muslims; they worshipped the same God; Rāma and Raḥīm, Keshava and Karīm are the names of the same Being; he cried out: "My illusion has passed away, there is no difference at all between Hindu and Musalman".²⁷ His followers, the Dādupanthīs, very much diminished in numbers, exist even today. With a few variations in outlook but united in the general theme of devotion, the essential unity of Islam and Hinduism, and impregnated deeply with the influence of Islam, there arose many saints and sects, the discussion of whose teachings will sound like repetition. More and more they used the terminology of Islam and accepted its basic ideas, but they did not become Muslims in the sense of joining the Muslim community. For instance the Sādhs, followers of Bīrbhān, a contemporary of Dādū, are strict monotheists believing in one God, "to Whom alone is worship due; not to earth, nor stone, nor metal, nor wood, nor trees, nor any created thing."²⁸

In Bengal Chaitanya (1485-1533) was inspired by the same ideas. He believed firmly in devotion to God, Krishna in his case, and rejected the ritual and caste system of Hinduism. The main purpose of religious life was the attainment of an ecstatic feeling in the love of God, which was helped by music; this feeling could be any man's, whatever his creed or caste, provided he devoted himself to the love of God.²⁹ The Kartābhajas, an offshoot of the school of Chaitanya, went

²⁵ For Dādū, see Orr. The sentiments mentioned here are expressed frequently in Dādū's poems, e.g., *Bānī*, edited by Tripathi, p. 140; Orr, pp. 61, 91, 93, 105, 120, etc.

²⁶ Dādū Dayāl, *Bānī*, edited by Dwivedi, p. 109. Also, *Bānī*, edited by Tripathi, p. 140.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

²⁸ Wilson, *The Religious Sects of the Hindus*, pp. 45, 55, 56.

²⁹ Lila; *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, pp. 131-152.



further in accepting even minor Muslim ideas, for instance the observance of Friday as sacred.³⁰ A similar movement grew up in Mahārāshtra, the land of the Marathas, which, in the words of Ranade, the Maratha historian, was deeply indebted to the ideas of Islam whose "influence was at work with greater effect on the popular mind in Mahārāshtra, where preachers both Brahmin and non-Brahmin were calling the people to identify Rāma with Raḥīm, and ensure their freedom from the bonds of formal ritualism and caste distinctions, and unite in common love of man and faith in God".³¹ One of these teachers was Nāmdeva, who lived probably in the fourteenth century and who has written one of the most scathing condemnations of idolatry ever written anywhere.³² Tukārām, who is generally believed to have inspired Shivāji as his spiritual guide, does not seem to have shared his dislike of Islam or of the Muslims. Some of his verses could have been written only by one who believed not only in one God but also in the mission of the Prophet.³³

Nānak has been kept out of the discussion up to this point, since he has come to command great importance because of the rôle played by the Sikhs in the history of the subcontinent. He was born in 1469 of Khatri parents at Talwandī in the district of Gujaranwala in West Pakistan.³⁴ He showed little interest in wordly matters, though his father and other relations did

³⁰ Chand, p. 219.

³¹ Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*, pp. 60-55

³² He says that his guru gave him the following advice: "A stone god never speaks. What possibility then of his removing the disease of mundane existence? A stone image is regarded as God, but the true God is wholly different. If a stone god fulfils desires, how is it he breaks when struck? Those who adore a god made of stone lose everything through their folly. Those who say and hear that a god of stone speaks to his devotees are both of them fools. Those who extol the greatness of such a god and call themselves his devotees, should be regarded as worthless persons, and their words should not be heard by the ear. If by chiselling a stone, a god is made of it and is worshipped with care for many years, will he be of use at any time?" (Bhandarkar, p. 90). This teacher should not be confused with another Nāmdeva of North India for whom Sultān 'Ālam Shāh of the Saiyid dynasty built a *khānqāh* (*Cultural Heritage of India*, II, p. 251).

³³ E.g.: "First among the great names is Allah, enever forget to repeat it, Allah is verily one, the Prophet is verily unique.
Thou art one, O Friend, Thou art one, Thou art one,
I do not exist but in Thee (Tukārām: *Abhanga*, p. 86).

³⁴ For Gurū Nānak's life see Macauliffe, I, pp. 1-194.



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all they could to train him for earning a livelihood. At last at the age of thirty he left his home in the company of a Muslim minstrel, Mardāna. He is said to have travelled widely in the subcontinent, Ceylon, Iran, and Arabia. He is recorded to have held discourses with many a Sufi and mystic. Like Kabir he was claimed both by the Muslims and the Hindus. He was deeply influenced by Islam and he uses its terminology frequently; indeed all his thinking seems to have been done in the terminology of Islam and he accepted many of its basic ideas.³⁵ He believed in the Islamic conception of God and rejected polytheism in any form. He rejected caste and formalism and ritual of every description. He claimed to have been inspired directly by God Who had vouchsafed him wisdom. His followers were required to believe in his mission, in his conception of God and were asked to lead virtuous lives. He was not responsible for the conversion of the Sikhs into a military sect; this was a later development. The Sikh gurus, so long as they did not come into conflict with the Mughul Empire, were treated like other men of God and were looked upon as mystics.

Apart from the officially organized group of disciples, the Sikhs, there seem to have been others tracing their spiritual lineage to Nānak and even more inclined towards Islam. There was, for instance, in the eighteenth century, a widely respected recluse in Delhi who had a monastery on the bank of the Jumna in the vicinity of the old secretariat building; he was known as Majnūn Shāh Nānakshāhī,³⁶ after him is named a mound, the Majnūn kā Tilā, being the site where his monastery once stood; it is graced even today with the sole remnant of the building, a handsome minaret in the Mughul style. He has found no recognition in Sikhdom, perhaps, because he

³⁵ Make kindness thy mosque, sincerity thy prayer carpet, what is just and lawful thy Qur'an,

Modesty thy circumcision, civility thy fasting, so shalt thou be a Musalman;

Make right conduct thy Ka'bah, truth thy spiritual guide, good works thy creed and thy prayer,

The will of God thy rosary, and God will preserve thy honour, O, Nānak. (Macauliffe, I, p. 38).

³⁶ Khān Dawrān, text, pp. 23-25.



did not identify himself with them. Did Guru Nānak's following have a Muslim wing which has disappeared? This is not impossible because the had relations between the Sikhs and the Muslims in the course of history might have pushed the wedge even deeper; the Sikhs would not be too anxious to recognise that their guru had other followers besides themselves. Despite the political differences which grew up between the Muslims and the Sikhs the influence of Islam is writ large upon the tenets of Sikhism. The Sikhs are believers in monotheism, reject idolatry, and though caste has crept into them their religion does not approve of it. The depth of the influence of Islam can be judged from the fact that portions of Muslim religious and mystic literature form part of the Sikh scriptures.

The tradition of mysticism deeply tinged with Islam continued to exist in the beliefs of Hindu thinkers and sects up to the middle of the nineteenth century; then it gradually began to die because of the impact of new forces upon Hinduism and the political and economic decline of the Muslims.

In the sixteenth century Islam might well have surveyed the scene with considerable satisfaction and been pleased with such wide acceptance of the values for which it stood. Seldom in the course of history have the values of one religion been so readily and sincerely accepted by another; and, if it is taken into consideration that Islam was dealing with a civilization much more ancient than itself, possessing well-developed systems of speculative philosophy and metaphysics, the success was most remarkable. Hinduism had successfully fought against Buddhism and Jainism and absorbed within its social system many foreign peoples; never had it shown the same accommodation to an alien philosophy. It seemed that Islam had won a major victory and had penetrated Hinduism so deeply as to make some of its sects little different from its own heresies.

These results were not, indeed could not, be achieved by the theologians. They did not speak a language which the Hindu mystics could understand. The logical and precise thinking, often juristic, of the theologians would have left



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the exuberant Hindu mind cold. To the theologian the demarcation between Islam and non-Islam is clear and decisive; error and truth cannot be mixed. The mystic, sometimes himself a heretic, was capable of appreciating the common ground between his own views and the opinions of others; himself attaching greater value to the spirit than to the form of religion, he could set considerable value upon the acceptance of principles which, to his mind, were of great importance. This does not mean that the Sufis did not consider the formal adherence to Islam fundamental or necessary; they devoutly believed, at least the majority of them, that spiritual progress could be but limited without the fullest allegiance to Islam; but they did not totally reject the value of the mystic experience of others. Their séances were sometimes joined by non-Muslims who were thus drawn into an appreciation of Sufism and its basic concepts. There were some who were converted to Islam in course of time, but there were others who thought that they could reach the goal without formal conversion. In this chapter we have dealt with the latter group. This communion between the Muslim and Hindu mystics was also made possible by the fact that there was a tradition of mysticism and exercises leading to the ecstatic feeling among the Hindus as well. The monism of Vedānta had some points of contact with the doctrine of *waḥdat-u'l-wujūd*; without going into the controversies regarding the different conceptions of God and His manifestations, the Hindu and Muslim mystics could talk about His omnipresence and the possibility of achieving union with Him or losing themselves in His realization. One reads of Hindu yogis attending not only séances of the Muslim Sufis but also participating in their discussions; these do not seem to have been held in a spirit of controversy but for the purpose of understanding the methods and results obtained by the adherents of different faiths. In this way, through efforts for spiritual awakening and progress, a movement came into existence which caught the imagination of large sections of the population and blossomed forth in literary and poetic creations.

The question, however, arises whether this was a one-sided victory for Islam, or whether it was a victory at all. Whose



voice was it that was speaking through Kabīr and others of his way of thinking? Could it be the voice of Islam? Or was it the voice of Hinduism? To judge from what they preached, it seems to have been the voice of Islam; fundamentally, however, it was Hinduism working in its subtle and sophisticated manner. It is the fundamental concept of Hinduism, not of Islam, that all that a philosophy or religion has to offer can be obtained by moulding actions in accordance with it without a formal repetition of its credo. Within its bosom Hinduism has nurtured diverse schools of thought; even the code of individual and social conduct need not be uniform, if it is tolerated or accepted by a sufficiently large number to form a group. This group may feel different from other Hindus, but in course of time Hindu ideas and standards begin to percolate through it and ultimately it becomes a part of the environment and indistinguishable from it. This is what has happened to many a sect which rose in Hinduism. In the acceptance of Islamic values, it was the synthesizing tendency of Hinduism asserting itself. In effect Hinduism said to Islam: "You have come with a philosophy which has considerable appeal for many of my adherents. I cannot win in this struggle by standing in their way; therefore I am accepting a good deal of what you say. Of course I cannot scuttle myself to please you; I have a sufficiently large number of adherents, whose loyalty to me is too deep to be affected by anything you may offer or any criticism that you consider valid, but I must save as many as I can from amongst those who are too enamoured of your way of thinking. You have already been stealing my sheep; I know you will steal many more; but I will save as many as I can by giving them within my own fold all that you have to offer".

Islam had no answer to this. In its own body there were men who laid the greatest stress upon the spiritual values of religion and considered formal ritual to be mere chaff,³⁷ it

³⁷ Hāfiẓ says:

جلوہ بر من مفروش ملک الحاج کہ تو
خانہ می ہوئی و من خانہ خدا می بینم

(O chief of the pilgrims, do not boast in my presence;
Thou seest only the House, but I see the Lord of the House).



could only offer the values for which it stood, and it hoped that the acceptance of those values would lead to total conversion. In Hinduism it found some weaknesses and pointed them out with considerable vehemence; Hinduism responded by saying that those who considered them to be weaknesses should abjure the weaknesses and not Hinduism. This is an armour against all intruders which Hinduism has used with great effect. A few centuries later when Western civilization and Christianity posed the same kind of problems, Hinduism replied by the same methods; it threw up sects like the Brahmo Samāj; it produced thinkers like Gandhi and Nehru, the former an apostle of Christian values to an extent that he was hailed as the most Christ-like man of his age, and the latter speaking the language of the twentieth century in such a way that he appears to be the embodiment of all its virtues. This armour, whatever may prove to be its utility against the ideologies of the present and the future, has proved effective both against Christianity and Islam. The Bhakti saints were never tired of repeating that the Muslims and the Hindus were not different and that all religions were the same. If that view is accepted, conversion becomes meaningless. The Bhakti saints were absolutely sincere in what they said; it is not intended to imply that they hatched a conspiracy for preventing the conversion of Hindus to Islam; the result, however, of their teachings was that the numerical growth of the Muslim community in the subcontinent was seriously affected. In this there was no cause of exultation for Islam.

There were also other reasons why Islam should find its success of doubtful benefit to itself. The custom of admitting to discipleship men of different faiths was a characteristic of many of the Bhakti saints. By their saintly lives and their catholicity of views the Sufis had drawn many Hindus into the circle of their admirers; Muslims felt attracted to the Bhakti saints who emphasized the values with which they were familiar; the views of these saints about empty observance of ritual were familiar to the Muslims through their own Sufis. There grew up an atmosphere where greater importance was attached to the spiritual values of religion than to the ritual and the communal sense which were alike at a discount; there were



many minds which began to think that the external aspects of religion had no significance; outward conformity began to slacken; for many this set a fashion; laxity increased; it seemed that the very hold of Islam was growing weak. All religions find it difficult to fight laxity and indifference. It needs a strong spiritual urge to sustain belief in religion itself, if the outward observances are relegated to the position of merely non-essential excrescences; such an urge is not so common as to prevent the growth of indifference towards religion in a society which has grown lax. Besides, if Muslims continued to join brotherhoods headed by non-Muslims, there was the danger of their gradual absorption into Hinduism itself; for while Hinduism found it difficult to accommodate individual converts, the absorption of a group was extremely easy. The reason why Hinduism finds it easy to absorb groups is that the Hindus themselves are a collection of a vast number of groups and sub-groups represented by the castes and subcastes. The four *varnas* are merely the broad classifications into which are gathered all these groups which have come into existence as the result of diverse historical forces. This is how all the foreigners who entered the subcontinent before Islam were made a part of the Hindu world. The group started life as an independent entity; in course of time it absorbed the basic ideas of Hinduism and became indistinguishable from others; its loyalties also were won by long association. The attachment of Muslims to Hindu brotherhoods seemed to be a step in that direction. Where the Muslim disciples believed that their spiritual guide was a Muslim, the situation was better, but there were instances where this was not so. For instance the founder of the Kartābhajas was a Hindu;³⁸ there were other instances as well. To the extent a Muslim accepted as his spiritual guide a person who was not a Muslim, his loyalty to the totality of Islam was undermined.

Another effect of the Bhakti movement was that if Islam and Hinduism were the same, then the Muslims had no reason to be proud of their faith; if this pride was gone, the Muslims

³⁸ His name was Rām Sumran Pāl; he was generally called Kartā Bābā. He was born towards the end of the seventeenth century near Chakdahā in Nādiā district (Chand, p. 219).



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had no other loyalty to keep them from absorption into Hinduism because they were not very colour or race conscious; in any case there did not exist among the Muslims of the subcontinent any vestige of racial unity. To the Muslims this looked like a religious problem; they somehow felt that their faith was being subverted; they may not have assessed the causes accurately or understood the basic factors in the situation, but their reaction was to try to strengthen their loyalty to their faith and to remove laxity. It is difficult to say whether the basic problem was understood in all its implications, but the pattern of the behaviour of the Muslims and the Hindus was alike characteristic. The fact that at this stage it was mostly instinctive throws interesting light upon the interrelation between the ideals and organization of the two communities and their behaviour. Throughout history, the endeavour of Hinduism has been first to preserve itself by accommodating the disturbing doctrines in spite of their alien nature, not within its fundamental philosophy but in the beliefs of some sections of its adherents, and also to try to absorb communities coming into the subcontinent by migration or arising spontaneously in its midst; these instinctive efforts have been successfully resisted by some communities if they have been vigilant. The instinct of the Muslim community of the subcontinent has been to maintain its individuality by resisting all attempts at absorption. The interplay of these two instincts provides the basic pattern for most areas of Hindu-Muslim relations in the subcontinent.

In the political and administrative spheres, in so far as the Bhakti movement strengthened the forces of conciliation between the rulers and the ruled, it rendered great service. The monarchs could not, even with the most strenuous efforts, have achieved the harmony that these saints and thinkers were able to bring about by reaching the hearts of the people. Its cultural contribution also was considerable; the poetic output of the Bhaktas has enriched the literature of various Indian languages.

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VI

The Challenge of Heterodoxy

The major sects in Islam are the Sunnis, the Shi'ahs, and the Kharijis. The Kharijis are now very few in number and they were never established in the subcontinent. The Shi'ahs are divided into two major divisions: the Ismā'ilis and the Ithnā 'Asharis. There are many minor sub-sects among the Shi'ahs, but they do not deserve mention because of their insignificant rôle in the history of this area. The Sunnis form the majority in the Muslim world and are considered to be the orthodox wing of Islam. There are four schools of theology and jurisprudence among the Sunnis: the Ḥanafī, the Shāfi'ī, the Ḥanbalī, and the Mālikī, named after the jurists who founded them; all four are considered to be equally orthodox. A body of nonconformists, called Ghair-muqallids, has also grown up which does not consider itself bound by the rulings of any of these schools; its own interpretations tend to be fundamentalist. In the subcontinent, the Ḥanafīs came to form the majority among the Sunnis because of the long connection with Central Asia; the Shāfi'īs have mostly been concentrated in the South and some of the maritime districts; the Ithnā 'Asharis came much later. Towards the close of the fifteenth century the position was that orthodoxy was enthroned in power, the Ismā'ilis were a comparatively

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small community, living quietly, having lost interest in politics because there was little scope for their activities under orthodox Muslim governments. No other sect was in the picture. However, no orthodox belief can be so strongly entrenched as to be immune against the attacks of heterodoxy.

Heresy is almost a corollary of belief; understanding of truth cannot always be identical. Deviations do grow up within the fold of a religion which are looked upon by the main body of believers as misguided; so long as human thinking retains individual flavour, all systems will breed their rebels as well as heretics. When a religion spreads over a vast area rich in traditions of culture and philosophy, as Islam did within a short time, it cannot obliterate all traces of previous beliefs. Egypt, Asia Minor, Iran and Central Asia had long histories of civilization when they came into contact with Islam. From the very first day of its entry into these lands, it had to deal with a body of thought which it had to reject, tolerate, or assimilate. Rejection is a conscious process which implies examination and evaluation, but assimilation is not always conscious, it is mostly subconscious and new ideas enter into our convictions without being subjected to criticism. A region with a long history of culture has traditions of thought which create a common pool of ideas; these permeate all religions and philosophies which spread there. When scholars set themselves the task of discovering the elements borrowed by Islam from other sources, they forget this fact. There may have been some conscious borrowing, but many ideas came subconsciously; even what has been borrowed consciously was acceptable because a common background of ideas made such borrowing feasible. Through the processes of subconscious thinking rose heresies of a fundamental nature, because previous concepts took the mind of the thinker into channels which were in reality foreign to the mother philosophy. This does not include the unbelievers, the sceptics and the rebels, who are the natural product of the prevalence of a philosophy. There will always be some who do not accept what is universally believed in their environment. Sometimes such rebellion has led to great discoveries and has opened new avenues of thought, mostly it has been barren and fruitless.



Heterodoxy is made of a different substance. It generally arises from an earnestness of mind, which seeks to find answers to questions which plague it and comes to believe fervently in the answers which it thinks it has found. Islam is peculiarly vulnerable to the dangers of heterodoxy because it does not possess a church. It has, in the final resort, to depend upon the strength of disorganized opinion to resist inroads upon the purity of its doctrine. *Ijmā'*, the consensus of competent opinion, takes time to crystallize. Therefore, opinions which have been considered heretical have sometimes thrived and even gained the support of authority. Some heresies have been eliminated through the education of public opinion, others have been assimilated in modified forms and some thrive even today. The door has not been finally closed upon the rise of heresies; but because doctrinal differences seldom arouse the same passions today as they did in a more religion-conscious age, heterodox opinions no longer create the same dissensions and the rise of new sects is much less frequent.

In the earlier period, however, the rise of heresies created grave problems for Islam. Apart from the natural inflow, through the conversion of enlightened peoples, of ideas which were, like Greek philosophy, of a beneficial nature, a conscious effort was made by two religions to introduce their beliefs into Islam and thus to subvert it. They had perfected a technique of working underground in Iran before the advent of Islam. The Mazdakis and the Manichaeans had been suppressed by Zoroastrianism, and, to save themselves from annihilation, had gone underground. They did not change their methods after the Muslim conquest and continued their underground activities. Through their secret work, there crept into Islam heresies which show the comingling of the ideas of these religions with certain doctrines of Islam. The Ismā'ilis learnt the techniques of working underground and subverting the faith of the followers of other sects and religions. Through these contacts there also grew up other Shi'ah sects with extreme doctrines, almost contradictory to the basic principles of Islam. The doctrines of Manichaeism itself were more of an esoteric nature, known fully only to the elect; the auditors



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knew the doctrines and secrets of secondary importance and the laymen were told only vaguely of the deeper mysteries of religion.¹ The atmosphere was one of mystery and emphasis was laid upon symbols believed to possess mystic significance. Such ideas when preached sedulously and discreetly began to permeate the beliefs of the people. Some concepts became so familiar that they were assumed as axioms. Their influence can be traced in some of the thinking, though not the doctrine, of the Ismā'ilis as well as the Ithnā 'Asharis. Some of them were accepted by a few heretical schools of Islamic mysticism.

It is necessary to give a brief account of the rise of mysticism in Islam at this stage so that its orthodox schools may be distinguished from the heretical ones.²

Religion is based on conviction which is seated in the depth of human consciousness; its nature is not rational in the sense of having been implanted in the human heart by logic or argument. It gains in strength if it is capable of being understood through reason as well; throughout history the great religions have aspired to explain their tenets in some rational manner. The real impulse for religion, however, does not come through rational thinking; it is an emotional longing; therefore, all theistic religions have produced devotees who have found solace and peace in mysticism. In the intensity of his God-consciousness Muḥammad was a mystic; through the depth of communion his mind was attuned to Reality. There are many traditions which show that several of his immediate disciples were deeply endowed with that soul-consuming love of God which seeks mystic communion and ultimately, through the intensity of longing, is rewarded. In spite of the emphasis upon moderation by the Prophet himself, some of his disciples devoted themselves so completely to prayer and meditation that they seldom left the mosque. They came to be called aṣḥāb-u'ṣ-ṣuffah, the people of the cloister.³ The traditions of piety and other worldliness cultivated by these disciples were not only maintained but received encouragement from the political developments after the

¹ See article on Manichaeism in *Columbia Encyclopedia*.

² For a bibliography on Sufism, see Pareja, II, pp. 657, 658.

³ Nizāmī, *Tārīkh-i-mashā'ikh-i-Chisht*, pp. 31-33.



establishment of the Umayyad caliphate. The more famous disciples of the Prophet were deeply religious men of great piety; they lived in poverty and devoted themselves to prayers and fasting; however, their conception of piety did not exclude an interest in public affairs. Some of them distinguished themselves as administrators, governors and generals. There were important sections of the community which did not approve of the manner in which the Umayyads raised themselves to power; they also objected to many of their policies and methods of government. They held that the caliphate had been changed into an empire, thus losing its essentially Islamic character. At the same time they did not like to weaken the secular authority of Islam. Hence the more pious turned away from the affairs of the state and increasingly their piety expressed itself in refraining from all activities which they thought would involve them in conflict with their conscience. Some of them like the earlier *aṣḥāb-u'ṣ-ṣuffah* were temperamentally quietists and found peace in retirement and devotional practices.

Such people are profoundly emotional; the restlessness of their souls finds respite only in contemplation and communion with God. It may start with such humility as sees little good in oneself, which feeling adds to one's shortcomings and gives a deep consciousness of sin; this stage is, however, soon passed and all that remains is a consuming love of God. Some writers have discovered a difference between the earlier mystics of Islam and those who came later, drawing attention to the greater sense of sin which the former display; this, however, is misleading.⁴ Throughout, the ruling passion is love; if there is a sense of sin it is because in moments of depression the devotee feels himself unworthy of such love; if there is a feeling of exultation, it is because the experience is unique. However, there was a difference between the earlier mystics of Islam and the later ones; in its earlier development, Islamic mysticism had not made an effort to develop a theory and a philosophy; it was practical and not theoretical; it was a matter of experience and not of intellectual understanding. The later mystics tried to rationalize their experience. In the beginning the writings were of an ecstatic nature, later came systematic

⁴ Chand, p. 68.



and organized thinking. It is here that the difficulties begin; in its essence mystic experience is incapable of discussion and can be expressed only through symbols. The average reader who acquires an understanding of the more superficial symbolism will not go far wrong in interpreting the broad nature of the emotions involved because, like divine qualities which are too exalted for proper comprehension, according to theologians and mystics alike, and which are yet comprehended however inadequately through their human parallels, the mystic emotions, being within the experience of humanity, are not entirely unintelligible to the human mind. But then the mystics claim that their experience becomes remote from the normal emotions and baffles description.

And yet some of the mystics have made the effort. The need arose because others sought light from them and wished to be guided. Slowly, therefore, arose literature and systems of discipline, the *shaikh* being the experienced teacher, his disciples trying to tread the same difficult path. There were other reasons for this kind of organization. The disciple passed through intellectual and emotional crises, not realising that the mood which seemed to be the culmination of his endeavours might be a transient one or even deceptive. When an extreme discipline is imposed upon the novice and physical and psychological devices are used for producing concentration as well as ecstasy, he is liable to lose his balance. Because the *shaikh* has passed through such difficulties, he is able, by timely counsel, to keep his disciple on an even keel and restrain him from extravagances of feeling as well as of expression. During such a period of training the pupil has to put the most implicit faith in the *shaikh*.⁵ The different *silsilahs* developed various methods of training the novice; these differed mainly

5. The Persian poet refers to this in his couplet :

بے سجاده رنگین کن گرت پیر مغان گوید
کہ سالک بے خبر نبود ز راه و رسم منزل لها

Soak the prayer carpet in wine if the chief of the Magi asks thee to do so
Because one who has trodden the path knows the ways and customs of the road. (Hāfiz, the opening *ghazal*).

The *shaikh* is frequently referred to as the chief of the Magi.



in technique and not in the goals to be achieved.⁶ Many mystics came to believe that some Sufis had indulged in such ecstatic and extravagant statements that if Sufism was not rescued from indiscipline it would undermine the very beliefs for which it stood. Then there was also the need of not letting all this depth of emotion go waste and of harnessing it in the service of Islam. This needed association with some discipline and organization; when the *silsilahs* emerged they rendered yeoman service to Islam by spreading its message in new areas and by bringing about moral regeneration. They also successfully fought certain heresies. In this endeavour they had to devote some attention to the theory of their beliefs as well as to their experience.

This would show that the Sufi *silsilahs* did not lack the love of Islam, nor indeed did they compromise their beliefs so far as the main tenets of Islam were concerned; but this does not mean that they always saw eye to eye with orthodoxy. The attachment to theological doctrines without the depth of emotion, which should be the hallmark of religious life, irritated some of the Sufis; besides, not all of the Sufi methods were to the liking of orthodoxy. The divergence between orthodoxy and some of the *silsilahs*—and it must be emphasized that the main *silsilahs* were by no means heretical in their opinions—was small and insignificant. Harmony was increasingly established by three factors; mostly the *shaikhs* were not only properly educated but some of them were trained theologians themselves; many theologians were influenced by mysticism and subjected themselves to its discipline; and the real arbitrators, the Muslim people, had respect for both and minimized the differences.

Heresy, however, continued for long to be associated with some Sufis. The reasons are not far to seek. The Sufi seeks to lose himself in the love of God and desires union with Him. This is not a physical condition; it can be attained only in the spiritual sense with an emotional awareness of that

⁶ The various *silsilahs*, also called in certain countries *ṭarīqahs*, find mention in various works. A good concise description is in Pareja, II, pp. 659 *et seq.*; also see articles in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; for the *silsilahs* working in the subcontinent there are notices in Nizāmī, *Tārīkh-i-mashā'ikh-i-Chisht*, pp. 130-134; etc.



union. Through concentration and other means this sense is cultivated until it results in a feeling of unity between the ego and God. As the result of this intensity of feeling the Sufi begins to have a sense of unity with the entire cosmos, which, in his mind, gets united with God. This central feeling has been the cause of the rise of several heresies; where it has been disciplined under the fostering care of a more mature mind, no serious deviation has taken place, but in some instances ideas and beliefs, sometimes irreconcilable with orthodox Islam, have been cultivated and even propagated. On the whole some form of monism came to be generally accepted by the Sufis; some did not push it to the logical extremes in developing doctrines which would run counter to the basic principles of Islam, and, for that matter, of all religions which attach some importance to human responsibility; others ignored these limits and expressed opinions which were patently heretical.⁷

Another fruitful source was the emphasis laid by the Sufis on the spirit rather than the forms of religion. It is quite true that a lifeless ritual has no spiritual significance or validity; the orthodox Sufis did not go beyond this, but there were extremists who attached no value whatever to the externality of religion. This in itself is heresy; but the argument went further and some extremists did not even attach importance to the loyalty to a creed which distinguishes the follower of one faith from another.⁸ They were willing to accept opinions and practices which were, according to orthodox opinion, un-Islamic. This is the reason why among some of the heterodox Sufis one comes across belief in metempsychosis, incarnation and pure immanence. The orthodox schools of Sufism condemned these ideas, but they were not able to uproot them. Such heterodox schools of thought picked up ideas from various

⁷ The classical example is of Hallāj, who was so overwhelmed by his feeling of monism that he asserted: "I am the Truth". Intellectually he did not believe in monism to the extent that some others did, because he thought that there was a difference between God and His manifestations. For a discussion of his views the best single reference is Massignon; there is an informative short note in Pareja, II, pp. 647, 648.

⁸ Ibn-u'l-'Arabī says: "Every one praises what he believes, his God is his own creature...consequently he blames the beliefs of others". In continuation he says that if he were just, he would "perceive God in every form and every belief". (Nicholson, *Mashāriq-u'l-anwār*, p. vi).



sources; Nestorians, Manichaeans, Buddhists all contributed to their thought. Thus in the body of heterodox Sufism one found the seeds of many a heretical opinion. As a matter of fact the doctrine of monism in itself was a fertile ground for heresy because if all is God and all phenomena are merely His manifestation, why should it be wrong to worship Him in His manifestations? Also, if all phenomena are His manifestations, all that is done by any phenomenal being is not its own deed, but the act of God. How then can there be right or wrong, good or evil? And in what sense is the human being responsible for his actions?⁹ These were not the only questions which arose and often found answers contrary to the teachings of Islam. There were some non-Muslim schools of thought that had come to believe in monism, but their monism was not the same as that of the Sufis; yet their conceptions, especially those about cosmogony, came in handy and were uncritically adopted.

Sufism has little need of these ideas; it is a path, a method of spiritual advancement and of seeking communion with God; yet in endeavouring to find a philosophical explanation of its mystic experience it had to rely, very often, upon the thinking of those who had reached the same conclusions through speculative thought. The validity of spiritual experience, even though not always infallible, is at least higher, because of its practical nature, than that of speculative thought, which can only probe into possibilities without ever attaining even an illusory satisfaction of having witnessed the reality. However, there is nothing surprising in the efforts of the Sufis to understand the significance of their experience through what seemed to be either rational processes or the outcome of similar experience of the followers of other religions. In their company, because the Sufis were not inhibited in discussing spiritual matters with non-Muslims, they could not help, through this exchange of ideas, the sub-conscious acceptance of some notions that were not Islamic in origin.

9 Hāfiz says:

گناه گرچه نبود اختیار ما حافظ تو در طریق ادب کوئی و گو گناه من است

Though it was not within our power to sin, Hāfiz,
Thou shouldst endeavour to be submissive and say, the sin is mine.



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The tendency to rationalize Sufi thoughts received another impetus. The success of the Sufi poets in attaining philosophical and mystic depth and the popularity of Sufism itself, made it natural that other poets should try to imitate and emulate them; thus there grew up an intellectual understanding of the Sufi truths which did not depend upon experience at all and, in this manner, what had been a sacred sphere of religious experience became the subject of poetic license and exaggeration. Hyperbolic statements were made which would not always have been approved by the true Sufis. There arose writers on the subject who dealt with the problem more as an intellectual exercise than an attempt to portray experienced truth.

Thus it will be seen that Sufism could give cover to many ideas which were unacceptable to the orthodox, and even to the more disciplined Sufis. In the subcontinent, contacts came to be established with the Hindus. Some of the sects which grew up under the impact of the Bhakti movement could be considered to be as much the heresies of Islam as of Hinduism. The Vedantic ideas of monism sought and in certain circles found identification with the monism of the Sufis.¹⁰ Certain ideas of the basic Indian philosophy had become familiar to the Muslims both through their contacts with the Hindus and through the Buddhist traditions still prevailing at the time of the spread of Islam in Central Asia and the adjoining territories. It has already been mentioned that the ideas of metempsychosis, incarnation and immanence had been introduced into the thinking of some of the Sufis. Such ideas found greater strength by contacts with the Indian monists. When the Muslims found the Hindu Bhaktas saying what they had heard from some of their own Sufis and thinkers, they became confused. There was no dearth of people saying that religious differences were merely a matter of form and that all

¹⁰ The prince Dārā Shikūh was one of the most enthusiastic exponents of this view; in his preface to *Majma'-u'l-baḥrain*, he says in so many words that the differences between the monism of the Sufis and of the Vedantists were merely verbal (p. 116).



religious quest was for the same ends.¹¹ The piety and eminence of some of the Hindu saints and of heterodox Sufis attracted the Muslims, some of whom did not have the training to discriminate between the orthodox and the heretic; they accepted mystic teachings from whichever source they came. Laxity in the pursuit of the prescribed disciplines became common because there were so many religious persons saying that in themselves these were of little use.¹²

The Sufi *silsilahs* crusaded against such a situation, but they were not well equipped to fight these battles. They kept themselves within the orbit of Islam through the discipline which they imposed upon their disciples. This method was incapable of producing results outside because the man in the street judged the different saints in the field only on the basis of their reported sanctity or supernatural powers. In this matter the Sufis of the *silsilahs* were at a disadvantage because they could not adopt the methods of advertising similar to those who had more selfish and mundane goals. One of the undesirable products of Sufism has been the rise of charlatans who sedulously cultivate a reputation for supernatural powers and thus exploit the credulous. Such men are not strict in the performance of religious observances and, to justify their own laxity, tell their admirers that observances are not necessary. In this way they make a virtue of laxity and propagate it among the ignorant. There was no dearth of such people during the period under discussion. These conditions caused grave anxiety to those thoughtful Muslims who understood the significance of this process.

¹¹ Abū-'l-Faḍl wrote an inscription for a temple, in which he quoted the following couplet;

کفر و اسلام در رهت پویان وحده لا شریک له گویان

Islam and unbelief alike tread the path towards Thee,
Reciting all the time, He is one and He has no associates.

The popularity of this view can be judged from the fact that Dārā Shikūh argues in *Sirr-i-akbar* that the Qur'ān is hidden in the Upanishads (Preface to *Sirr-i-akbar*, reproduced in Hasrat, p. 263). Abū-'l-Faḍl's composition has been reproduced in Blochmann (p. liv).

¹² Dārā Shikūh has a quatrain:
The rosary spoke to me in a strange tongue!
It said: "Why dost thou make my head reel?
Wert thou to revolve thine own heart instead,
Thou wouldst know the object underlying man's creation". (Hasrat, p. 146).



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It is strange that a sincere anxiety of this nature should have resulted in the rise of a powerful heresy. There was a pious professor, Saiyid Muḥammad, in the university town of Jaunpur who was greatly worried with what he saw around himself. Not even his worst opponents have accused him of lacking learning, sincerity or piety. He wanted to save the Faith of which he was a doctor, but he felt himself to be too insignificant and helpless to undertake a task of such magnitude. He, however, continued to be obsessed with the desire, seeking divine help and guidance. He thought that he heard a voice say to him: "Thou art the Mahdī". The Messianic hope has been strong among certain sections of the Muslims and has led to the rise of several sects. The Qur'ān contains no such promise, but there are traditions of doubtful authenticity ascribed to the Prophet which afford a foundation for such a belief. When the first millennium after the birth of the Prophet was coming to a close, many Muslim minds were attracted to the idea of the advent of a teacher who would breathe a new life into Islam. This idea had become common and was accepted even in many orthodox circles. When Saiyid Muḥammad heard the prompting, he came to believe in its truth.¹³ He reached the conclusion that he was the Mahdī, the promised imām who would restore the pristine purity and glory of Islam. Then he started work in real earnest. His teachings were not heretical; he demanded greater conformity with the orthodox code of Islam. If he had not claimed publicly that he was the Mahdī, orthodoxy would have recognized him as one of its leaders; his claim, however, put him outside the pale. There has been a curious inconsistency in the attitude of orthodoxy towards this problem throughout history. It has not condemned the belief in the advent of the Mahdī but it has labelled with heresy every claimant to that dignity. Saiyid Muḥammad met with such vigorous opposition that he decided to leave Jaunpur; he was welcomed by the ruler of Gujrat, Sultān Maḥmūd (1458-1511); but orthodox opinion was against him, and, therefore, he had to leave Gujrat as well. He then went to Ḥijāz from where he proceeded to

¹³ Erskine, II, p. 475 *et seq.*; also Āzād, Muḥammad Ḥusain *Darbar-i-Akbari*, p. 739,



Iran; Shāh Ismā'il did not like the attention he was attracting, and he too sent him away. He ultimately died at Farrah in 1505. Though orthodox opinion was opposed to him, yet Shaikh 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, the traditionist of Delhi, has the highest praise for him, which is surprising.

The two famous lights of this movement were Shaikh 'Abd-u'llah Niyāzī and Shaikh 'Alā'i. The former belonged to the Niyāzī tribe of the Afghans who had settled down in the Panjab,¹⁴ and was originally a disciple of Shaikh Salīm Chishtī, who lies buried at Fathpūr Sikrī. Shaikh Niyāzī went for a pilgrimage to the Ḥijāz; on his way he came in contact with Mahdawism and was converted to it. He came and settled down near Biyana, where he engaged himself in missionary work.¹⁵ His piety and devotion attracted the attention of a young scholar, Shaikh 'Alā'i, who came of a well-known family and had already established his reputation as a scholar and as a shaikh.¹⁶ Shaikh 'Alā'i had a sensitive and enthusiastic mind; he began to preach with such vigour that he soon gathered around himself a band of workers who gave up their worldly pursuits and, like Shaikh 'Alā'i, devoted themselves to religious practices and preaching their faith. If they had limited themselves to preaching alone, perhaps nothing serious would have happened, but they started meddling in the affairs of others and if they saw any one absenting himself from prayers or violating in any other way the code of Islam, after using persuasion, they were not unwilling to use coercion.

This brought them into conflict with the officials, who did not approve of such activities. Shaikh Niyāzī was concerned at the zeal of his disciple and, anticipating trouble, asked him to go somewhere else for a little while. Shaikh 'Alā'i started for the ḥajj but circumstances intervened and he returned to Biyana. Makhdūm-u'l-mulk, the *ṣadr-u's-ṣudūr* and leader of the orthodox theologians at the court, asked for a trial of Shaikh 'Alā'i for heresy. Sulṭān Islām Shah Sūr was reluctant to accept the request but when the pressure increased he summoned Shaikh 'Alā'i to appear before him. He defended

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Badā'unī, III, pp. 45-47, has a good account.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 394 *et seq.*



himself with vigour and ability. The sultan asked him to give up his belief in the mission of Saiyid Muḥammad and said that he would appoint him the *muhtasib* of his dominions so that he would have all the facilities for preaching and enforcing the code of Islam upon the Muslims, but Shaiḥ 'Alā'i refused to entertain such a request. He said he wanted to preach Islam because he believed in it and not in return for wages. The sultan, reluctant to punish such an able and sincere man, asked him to go away from his dominions. Shaiḥ 'Alā'i did leave Biyana, but when he reached the frontier town of Hindiya near the Deccan, the governor became his follower. When this news reached the court, Shaiḥ 'Alā'i was summoned again.

In the meanwhile the Niyāzī tribe had rebelled and the sultan was incited to punish Shaiḥ 'Abd-u'llah Niyāzī. On his way to the Panjab the sultan summoned the shaiḥ. The shaiḥ presented himself, greeting the monarch, not with the salutations prescribed by the court, but with the plain "Peace be unto you" with which Muslims greet one another. The sultan, who was in an ugly mood because of the Niyāzī revolt, ordered the shaiḥ to be lashed until he was convinced that the shaiḥ had expired. His followers took him away and nursed him back to recovery. He then went away into the hills of the north-west frontier and returned to Sarhind after the death of Islām Shāh. He lived long enough to gain the respect of Akbar; however, the shaiḥ gave up his Mahdawī beliefs because it was reported to him by an eye-witness that Saiyid Muḥammad had himself repented some time before his death. This is not improbable because a sincere man like Saiyid Muḥammad must have seen that he had not achieved what the Mahdī was expected to achieve within his life time. He had enjoined those around him to tell his followers to abjure faith in his being the Mahdī. Many among his flock, however, did not accept this report as authentic and there are still groups of his followers in the Deccan and Gujrat.

When Shaiḥ 'Alā'i reached the court, the sultan referred his case to one Shaiḥ Baddah, who said that Shaiḥ 'Alā'i's deviation was not serious, but Shaiḥ Baddah's sons were afraid of Makhdūm-ul-mulk and, therefore, replaced their father's



letter with another saying that a theologian of Makhdūm-u'l-mulk's eminence was fully competent to deal with the case. Long journeys, continued privation and asceticism had told upon Shaiḫ 'Alā'is' health and he was in no condition to bear any punishment. The sultan was still leniently inclined and said to the shaiḫ: "Only whisper in my ear that you have abjured your belief and all will be well." The shaiḫ remained silent; at last being tired of the whole business, the sultan said to Makhdūm-u'l-mulk: "This is a matter between you and him", meaning thereby that he left the case in the hands of Makhdūm-u'l-mulk, who was also the chief judge of the realm. He ordered flogging and Shaiḫ 'Alā'i died at the third stroke. This happened in 1549.

Religious convictions can never be suppressed in this manner. Makhdūm-u'l-mulk had to embark upon a witch-hunt which ultimately ruined him and damaged the cause of orthodoxy almost irreparably. The Mahdawīs did not differ from the orthodox Muslims at that time in any respect except in their insistence upon the belief that Saiyid Muḥammad was the Mahdī. They were strict in the observance of all the religious practices of Islam; indeed a curious situation grew up in which the suspicion of heresy fell upon those who were the more zealous in their observance of the teachings of Islam. It is obvious that such persecution could only be futile; besides it gave an opportunity to unscrupulous persons to accuse their enemies of heresy; this created sympathy for the persecuted and won many enemies for Makhdūm-u'l-mulk as well as for the political power of orthodoxy.

The previous discussion has shown that there were several streams flowing in the same direction; ultimately during the reign of Akbar they joined and became a mighty river. Akbar's religious beliefs, as embodied in the Dīn-i-Ilāhī, would have been historically unimportant if they had concerned simply the idiosyncracies of an imperial mind; they are, however, important because they represent the culmination of trends which had been active in the life of the community for some time.

Laxity and heterodoxy had grown in volume towards the end of the rule of the Lodīs. The remedy which had suggested



itself to Saiyid Muḥammad contributed not to the strength of Islam but to its weakness by creating a fissure in its body. When Humāyūn came back to reclaim his empire, he had come under the influence of the Iranians. His acceptance of the Shī'ah doctrine seems to have been a temporary measure for the sake of getting help from Iran,¹⁷ because he conformed to the Sunni forms after his return. He, however, brought with him some Iranian officials, who, in the beginning, do not seem to have had much influence upon the religious policy of the Empire. The reason was that Humāyūn's own position was so shaky that he could not afford to alienate the Sunni population of his newly restored dominions. When the situation improved for the Mughuls, the real power was exercised by Akbar's guardian, Bairam Khān, who was suspected of entertaining Ithnā 'Asharī beliefs. He appointed Shaiikh Gadā'i who was also accused of Shī'ah leanings as the *ṣadr-u's-ṣudūr*, the highest religious dignitary in the state. However, the forms of orthodoxy were maintained and neither Bairam Khān nor Shaiikh Gadā'i openly professed the Shī'ah doctrines.

As a youth Akbar was devoted to orthodox beliefs and was extremely considerate in his dealings with theologians. The latter had, however, enjoyed the patronage of monarchs and wielded authority so long that they failed to understand the trend of the forces at work against them.¹⁸ Makhdūm-u'l-mulk had, through his vanity and harshness, lost the sympathy of many even among the orthodox theologians; those who had fallen under his suspicion rightly or wrongly for holding Mahdawī or other heretical views were certainly not his friends, nor, for that matter, partial to the orthodox theologians who had the power of persecuting men for their religious beliefs. It seems that the sympathy for the Mahdawīs was fairly widespread at this time; even among the orthodox, it has been noticed,

¹⁷ Badā'unī, I, p. 445.

¹⁸ Makhdūm-u'l-mulk and Islām Shāh Sūr were once passing through a narrow lane when they saw an enraged elephant coming towards them. The divine wished to proceed but the sultan would not let him. The scholar said: "O Emperor! let me step forward, for if thou art killed, the entire realm will fall into disorder". The sultan replied: "Master, thou dost not realize that if I am killed, there are nine lacs of Afghans to replace me; but if thou perishest, another like thee may not be born in India for ages" (Kabir, Muḥammad, f. 150b).



there were eminent men like Shaikh 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq of Delhi who had nothing but praise for Saiyid Muḥammad of Jaunpur; such men could not take the same view of the Mahdawis as did Makhdūm-u'l-mulk. Among those who had been persecuted and could be saved only through the intercession of a powerful noble was Shaikh Mubārak of Nāgor. He was a clever and learned man; he had two exceptionally brilliant sons. One of them, Faiḍī, was a poet of talent and succeeded in winning the patronage and friendship of Akbar; he soon introduced to the Emperor his brother, the learned Abū-'l-Faḍl.¹⁹ The family thus found an opportunity of undermining the influence of the orthodox '*ulamā*' at the court. To make matters worse for the '*ulamā*', they were not united among themselves and were so jealous of one another that they forgot the danger which threatened the entire group.²⁰ It was not in the interests of the Shī'ahs to bolster up orthodoxy; the Hindus certainly saw no advantage in allying themselves with the theologians; the latter were divided amongst themselves; it was obvious that only the emperor could keep orthodoxy in power. There were orthodox nobles; they, however, for reasons to be discussed presently, were not strong enough to counter the machinations of the dissident groups.

Akbar's marriage to a Rājput princess and his son's marriage to another had given the Rājputs considerable power. Apart from the influence exerted by the ladies themselves, which could not have been insignificant, their relations were treated as princes of the blood and were given high offices. The Central Asian officials had given so much trouble to Bābur and Humāyūn that Akbar had come to rely more upon Persian and Hindu nobles; the orthodox nobles, some of them of Indian birth and others mainly from Central Asia, were in no position to offer any effective resistance to Akbar's policies. When they did rebel and exploited opposition to Akbar's religious policies, they were effectively defeated; this shows that they were not able to muster all the help they needed to overthrow Akbar's regime. Of course the issues were

¹⁹ Blochman, I, p. xxxv.

²⁰ They went on merrily attacking one another; the story of the quarrels between 'Abd-u'n-nabī and Makhdūm-u'l-mulk is narrated in Badā'ūnī, II, p. 255.



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confused a little, but then they always are and it is difficult to make them crystal clear. Not all the orthodox officers joined in this cause, which only shows the difficulties involved in organizing a sufficiently widespread rebellion on the basis of the emperor's religious policy. One of the reasons was that the orthodoxy of the masses themselves had been undermined for the reasons narrated before. Thus there was no effective remedy if the emperor chose to tread a path leading to the uprooting of orthodoxy from the court. It seemed that all that heterodoxy had to do was to wean away the emperor from his orthodox views, and the course of events shows that the dissident elements gradually found out that it was not so difficult to do so, whereas the orthodox *'ulamā* discovered too late that Akbar was not as steadfast a supporter of their cause as they had learned to expect from the head of what had hitherto been an orthodox Muslim state. They were not prepared for the onslaught upon their stronghold and were taken by surprise by the foe, who seemed to carry all before him.

In these events Akbar's mind played an important rôle and it is necessary to understand it for an analysis of the situation. As a prince Akbar had successfully set at nought all the efforts of the tutors appointed by his father to give him schooling. Though the legend that he was absolutely illiterate is open to doubt, yet he had little facility in reading or writing. His was an uneducated mind; imperious, keen, intelligent but untutored. It was vulnerable to all forms of subtle flattery. Since he was shrewd and able in so many fields, it was difficult for him to understand that anything could be beyond his grasp; doubly so when he saw so many asserting in his presence that he was endowed with spiritual powers and was a man of destiny. A man whom fortune has favoured as it had Akbar easily falls into the fallacy that his success has a higher purpose which destiny is unfolding in new ways, especially when it is constantly being suggested to him by so many wise men. If he sees that learned men abjectly recognize him as the superior intellect, it is difficult for him to maintain his balance. Here was an ideal instrument for subverting the position of orthodoxy in the land, if only it could be won over. The times were propitious for such an endeavour because the beliefs of the rank and file

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among the Muslims had already been corroded by extraneous influences and doctrines which would prevent any sharp reaction on their part. Akbar's turning away from orthodoxy was a slow and gradual process in the beginning, but having once started it continued to gain momentum.

The dissident groups found their opportunity when the *ṣadr-u'ṣ-ṣūdūr*, Shaiḥ 'Abd-u'n-nabī, offended the emperor by disregarding his wishes in dealing with a Brahmin who had wounded Muslim sentiment by abusing the Prophet.²¹ He had forcibly seized some material intended for the construction of a mosque from a Muslim judge and when the judge had protested, the Brahmin had used filthy language against the Prophet. The facts of the case were not disputed by the monarch, who had appointed for a secret inquiry men who had no sympathy for orthodoxy. Shaiḥ 'Abd-u'n-nabī passed the sentence of death upon the Brahmin in his capacity as the chief judge of the empire, but because no sentence of capital punishment could be executed under the *Mughuls* without the monarch's approval, the chief judge pressed for orders from Akbar, who did not like the sentence but who also did not want to act openly against Muslim sentiment. All that 'Abd-u'n-nabī could get was that the matter was left in his own hands. He executed the offender. This did not please Akbar, who had really wanted to save the Brahmin; it was also his desire that 'Abd-un'-nabī should take the opprobrium. Now the Rājput ladies of the palace, the Hindu officers and others who did not like 'Abd-u'n-nabī, joined hands in inciting the monarch against the orthodox divine.

The *shaiḥ*'s position was weak because the sentence was not in accordance with the rulings of the Hanafī school of jurisprudence to which he belonged. The historian Bada'unī was the only person to point out that the judge could adopt a ruling of other schools if he thought such a step necessary for preventing an evil tendency. Akbar thought that the hold of orthodoxy on the affairs of the state was detrimental to the growth of his own authority and he appealed to Shaiḥ Mubārak to liberate him from the clutches of the orthodox divines. He was only too willing to oblige Akbar and came out with the

²¹ Bada'unī, III, pp. 80-83.



text of a legal decree to be signed by the leading theologians of the realm. It enunciated the well-known Islamic principle that where the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the authentic traditions of the Prophet are not clear in their application to a situation and the doctors of law are divided in their interpretation, "a just sultan" has the right to accept any of the interpretations offered.²² The next part of the ruling was not in accord either with previous practice or the spirit of the Muslim law. It said that Akbar was such a ruler, therefore, he had that right.

Theoretically if the state has to enforce a law and if there is no unanimity among the lawyers, some one has to decide the issue, hence the principle. It was taken for granted that the choice by the ruler would be *bona fide* and that the ruler would not only be inclined to be just but would also be capable of making a just choice; this implied knowledge of the law. In the past, where the ruler had the requisite knowledge of law he did choose between different interpretations in the field in cases where opinion was divided. In such instances the more widely held opinion would be accepted by the state. Later, with the rise of the Turks to power, because they were not so well versed in Arabic, the practice grew up of appointing a well-known and able scholar as the *ṣadr-u'ṣ-ṣudūr* or *shāikh-u'l-Islām* who performed this function for the monarch. This was a sensible procedure because monarchs were not expected to be expert lawyers familiar with all the legal niceties involved in deciding a controversial issue. The decree drafted by Shaikh Mubarak was drawn up in the form of a *maḥḍar*, a manifesto signed by those present when a decision has been arrived at. It has been wrongly termed a decree of infallibility, which it certainly was not.²³ It did not seek to say that Akbar was infallible; it did recognize implicitly that where there was a clear injunction or unanimity among the jurists, the emperor had no say; it stated explicitly that if the monarch issued any orders for the good of the people, and if these orders were in accord with some verse of the Qur'ān, it was the duty of the

²² *Ibid.*, II, pp. 271, 272 gives the text of the *maḥḍar*.

²³ Smith, Vincent, p. 178, calls it an "Infallibility" decree.



Muslims to obey them. These provisions did not by any means invest Akbar with any sort of infallibility.

In spite of all this, the document rightly created great resentment in the minds of the orthodox theologians. Those who were attached to the court or who had some office of profit under the crown had to sign it, mostly against their will; but those who did not depend in any manner upon the government, did not accept the validity of the *maḥḍar*.²⁴ There can be little doubt that it was a patently dishonest document and Shaikh Mubārak of all people must have known it to be so. The intention was not to remove any genuine difficulty in the legal affairs of the empire; it was simply to give Akbar the opportunity of instigating differences with the orthodox opinion and then posing as the arbitrator to help the cause of heresy. Since Akbar was not properly educated, he certainly was not qualified to choose between one legal opinion and another with any legal acumen. It was intended to be an instrument in the hands of heterodoxy and was taken to be so in learned circles. Its unpopularity can be judged by the fact that it is not recorded that Akbar utilised it even once. Akbar had advisers who gave him even better advice from their point of view; they got such people appointed as religious dignitaries and judicial officers at the capital and in the empire as were themselves heterodox in their opinions or possessed too easy a conscience to be worried by the law in acting upon the wishes of the emperor.²⁵ Naturally the orthodox felt that the emperor was bent upon injuring the interests of Islam.

The very fact that the emperor had tried to save the Brahmin shows a change in his sentiments. Not that he was familiar with the Hanafī ruling which holds that a *dhimmi*'s right of protection is not affected adversely by his use of insulting language for the Prophet, because that was pointed out to him later. An average Muslim is maddened by nothing so much as by a

²⁴ Shaikh 'Abd-u'n-nabī and Maḥdūm-u'l mulk were brought to the meeting by force and were made to sign the document under duress. Such happenings came to be known to the people (*Badā'unī*, III, p. 83).

²⁵ In Muḥarram 1004 A.H. the chief *muftī* of the Empire joined *Din-i-Ilāhī* (*Badā'unī*, II, p. 404). Mullā Sherī the *ṣadr* of the Panjab, wrote a poem consisting of 1000 verses in praise of the Sun (*ibid.*, p. 336). The instances can be multiplied.



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deliberate insult to the Prophet; it is obvious that Akbar had come so much under the influence of the Hindu ladies of the court that he did not mind the Brahmin's offence as did Shaikh 'Abd-u'n-nabī, even though the Brahmin had deliberately chosen to insult Islam by taking away the material intended for a mosque and then building a temple with it, by taking this material from the custody of the local judge, the *qāḍī*, and then by defying the summons issued by the chief judge of the empire. When we see that this very Akbar executed a servant of the palace for his negligence in falling asleep during his vigil when it was his duty to see that the flame of the sacred lamp should be kept alive, because Akbar had come to believe in the sanctity of fire and light in contravention of the principles of Islam,²⁶ his desire to save the Brahmin could not have arisen from any innate abhorrence of capital punishment or the idea that such a punishment was too extreme for the offence of the Brahmin.

Akbar had devoted himself to the religious exercises prescribed by some Sufis.²⁷ He spent long hours in these practices; at last he, in the midst of a big hunt, had an experience of a mystic nature.²⁸ He took this very seriously and was perhaps flattered into believing that it was the beginning of spiritual greatness. Under the Sufis who tread this path such early experiences are treated with great caution and the guide helps the novice in understanding their real significance; in Akbar's instance it seems to have added to his self-confidence in spiritual matters. Henceforth he consulted heterodox Sufis and mystics of other religions and adopted some of their practices. Sometimes he was guided by the desire to acquire supernatural and astrological advantages; for instance he recited the sacred names of the sun which he had learnt from a Hindu divine.²⁹ In all such efforts the motives were partly religious and partly the attainment of magic powers.³⁰ This in itself

²⁶ Elliot and Dowson, VI, p. 164.

²⁷ Badā'unī, II, p. 200.

²⁸ There is a good description in Smith, Vincent, pp. 158-160.

²⁹ Badā'unī, II, p. 322.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 261; also, Masson-Oursel, etc., "... a man, not yet a priest, the possessor of certain forms of words, could by the efficacy of those words bend nature to the achievement of his purposes" (p. 123).



denotes considerable departure from orthodox practice and could not have been coupled with a scrupulous regard for orthodox beliefs; however, sometimes as the result of the environment, it was not inconceivable that a Muslim might adopt these methods without seriously losing faith in Islam. During this period and even after, despite the Muslim horror of black magic, some Muslims resorted to witches for the attainment of some worldly end, knowing that it was forbidden, but still compromising with their conscience. Akbar's lapse, however, was more serious.

It was the custom of the Muslim monarchs in the subcontinent and outside to find time for discourse with theologians and other religious personages.³¹ This was considered to be an act of worship. Sometimes, out of curiosity or as a matter of policy, the leaders of other religions also were invited to such discussions, which were not meant for polemics but for understanding a different point of view. Akbar started by gathering the Muslim theologians and mystics.³² He soon discovered that the theologians were not able to agree on every point; this perhaps would not have been such a serious matter if the discussions had been kept within limits; however, they degenerated into personal attacks and quarrels.³³ Simultaneously Akbar's own mind was being weaned away from orthodoxy by the multifarious interests working at his court. Akbar's quarrels with the theologians led him into deriving pleasure from their confusion and humiliation.³⁴ With such brilliant allies in this mission as Shaikh Mubārak and Abū-'l Faḍl, he played the game of theologian-baiting with remarkable success. Soon all kinds of elements were introduced into the Hall of Worship, as the scene of these discussions was christened by Akbar; Hindu priests, Catholic missionaries, Zoroastrian *mobeds*, Jain anchorites and rationalists were all

³¹ This was a common practice and the accounts of practically all Muslim monarchs have such references; among Akbar's predecessors, Sher Shāh provides a good example (Sarwānī, f. 69a). Sulaimān Karārānī of Bengal and others before him had invited divines to discuss religious problems (Badā'unī, II, p. 200).

³² Badā'unī, II, p. 202.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203.



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welcome if they could put forward a point of view which had an appeal of novelty for the monarch. Some of these who made an impression upon the emperor were admitted to exclusive audiences and were given greater opportunities to explain their beliefs; only one category remained unrepresented among the emperor's favourites, that of orthodox theologians and Sufis who were not willing to violate the discipline imposed by their adherence to the *shar'*. This kind of continued communion with religious leaders of different faiths could not but leave a deep impression upon Akbar's mind.³⁵

This was an atmosphere where sycophants and flatterers also found an unrivalled opportunity. Hindu *pandits* came with forged prophecies about a monarch who would be powerful in the world and a protector of religion.³⁶ Some Muslims also were not to be left behind; they forged books of prophecies saying almost clearly that Akbar was the Mahdī who would bring about the renaissance of religion after the first millennium.³⁷ Those who could not forge texts started forging miracles; old women and servants came forward with tales of supernatural events showing Akbar's future greatness not only as a ruler but also as one specially favoured by God.³⁸ Men started begging for enrolment as disciples, because they had been convinced of the emperor's spiritual greatness through some secret vow to him which had been miraculously fulfilled.³⁹

In the beginning these suppliants were turned away, but at last Akbar relented and admitted them to his discipleship. In this he was persuaded by no less a man than Abū-'l-Faḍlī, who invented the doctrine that no one could be such an excellent religious guide for his people as their emperor who was a man of great spiritual attainments and one specially chosen by God to preside over the destinies of His people.⁴⁰ Not all monarchs were equipped for such a task; there were real monarchs and mere shadows of what kings should be like;

³⁵ Badā'ūnī, pp. 256, 257.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

³⁸ E.g., Fānī, p. 311.

³⁹ Abū-'l-Faḍlī, *A'in-i-Akbarī*, I, A'in 77.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*



seemingly they might look alike, but in truth there was no comparison; when a nation was so fortunate as to possess a real ruler, who could be better placed for guiding them upon the path of spiritual progress and welfare? Akbar would have been more than human if he had not come to believe in a good deal of what was said about him. He was the ruler of an empire inhabited by men of diverse faiths; therefore, he must set himself up as the teacher of men of different religions. In this he had precedents; there had been teachers in the subcontinent who had drawn followers from different faiths; if they could satisfy disciples of different faiths through their teachings, why not he? Hence he claimed to be the religious guide of his people. He did not limit his endeavours to the mystic sphere like some of the Sufis and the Bhakti saints; he tried to emulate the earlier caliphs in leading the congregational Muslim prayers in the capital on a Friday, but he was overwhelmed by the occasion and broke down in the middle of the sermon which had been written for him and it had to be finished by another person.⁴¹ There was no such difficulty in his becoming a spiritual guide and, therefore, he started an order called by the names of the Divine Faith and Divine Monotheism.⁴²

A good deal has been written by modern authors upon the religious views of Akbar. Some, mostly depending upon Badā'ūnī, have reached the conclusion that he abjured Islam completely and invented a new religion of his own; others have held that Akbar remained a Muslim and that his deviation from the faith of his forefathers was not serious.⁴³ It is true that some authors have read more into the statements of Badā'ūnī than he actually said; for this the translators are to blame. Badā'ūnī was a clever writer and he was capable of insinuating more than he actually said. A number of his passages are capable of dual interpretation; these are difficult to translate. Even where this is not so, he has been incorrectly translated and important words which qualify his damaging

⁴¹ Badā'ūnī, II, p. 268.

⁴² Divine Faith - *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*; Divine Monotheism - *Tawḥīd-i-Ilāhī*. Abū-'l-Faḍl, *A'in-i-Akbarī*, I, A'in 77, Badā'ūnī, II, p. 325.

⁴³ Smith, Vincent, holds that Akbar completely abjured the faith of his forefathers; Roy Chaudhury holds the contrary view.



statements have been left out.⁴⁴ The support which some authors find for their conclusions from the statements of the Catholic fathers is of little value because they can be demonstrated to be wrong or extremely exaggerated.⁴⁵ Even when all this is conceded, the opinions of those who think that Akbar did not deviate from Islam are also not sound. It is true that of conscious abjuring of Islam there was very little; Akbar seems to have believed that his understanding of Islam was more rational than that of the theologians with whom he differed. When he protested in a letter to 'Abd-u'llah Khān Uzbek, the ruler of Transoxiana, that it was a calumny that he had renegaded from Islam, he was probably sincere.⁴⁶ His was a complex mind and not disciplined enough to be able to see the contradictions in his own attitudes. He did a number of things and even held beliefs which would normally place a man outside the pale of Islam; for instance reverence for the sun is irreconcilable with the monotheism of Islam. He, however, does not seem to have thought so; in this respect he only represented, perhaps in an extreme form, the confusion in many Muslim minds.

Those Muslims, who became disciples of non-Muslim spiritual guides, never seem to have put the question to themselves

⁴⁴ Such passages are too many to be quoted here with their translations by later historians; one example might be offered: Blochmann in his translation of a passage from Badā'ūnī (I, p. 203) gives Mirza Jānī Beg's declaration in the following words: "I, such a one, son of such a one, have willingly and cheerfully renounced and rejected the Islam in all its phases, whether low or high, as I have witnessed it in my ancestors, and have joined the divine Faith of Shāh Akbar, and declare myself willing to sacrifice to him my property and life, my honour and religion". The text is (Badā'ūnī, II, p. 304):

من که فلان ابن فلان باشم بطوع و رغبت و شوق قلبی از دین
اسلام مجازی و تقلیدی که از پدران دیده و شنیده بودم ابرا و تبراً
نمودم و مراتب اخلاص چارگانه که ترگ مال و جان و ناموس
و دین باشد قبول کردم

A correct translation would be: "I such a one, son of such a one, in accordance with my inclination and heartfelt desire, have renounced and rejected the traditional and formal Islam, as I have witnessed in my forefathers, and have joined the Divine Faith..." The difference is obvious; it is not Islam "in all its phases" which is abjured, but the traditional and formal aspect of it. Such examples of loose translation can be multiplied.

⁴⁵ For instance, the statement that Akbar kept only one wife and gave away the others, having accepted the doctrine of monogamy. The fathers have indulged in gross exaggerations and were not well-informed (Du Jarric, pp. 44, 45).

⁴⁶ Abū'l-Faḍl, *Akbar-nāmah*, III, pp. 498, 499.



whether they would thus be guided on the path of Islam. It seemed to be a common fallacy among certain circles that religious beliefs had little relevance in the matter of spiritual development. They had two compartments for religion in their minds: one was for belief and the other for practices which would bring them supernatural or spiritual benefits; and these could co-exist without making inroads into each other's domains. Was it not a common saying of some Sufis and others that the external aspects of religion were not very important?⁴⁷ Was it not proclaimed from the housetops that all religious quests had the same end in view?⁴⁸ What was the harm, then, in neglecting the rulings of the doctors of law, who had merely the apparent in view and neglected the reality? Were these very doctors not characterized in some Sufi literature as being ignorant of the real values of religion? Why not try some of the methods advocated by other seekers of the truth? This does not imply rejection of anything; if you choose, for once, a different path, it does not mean that you say that the other path does not lead you there. If some prescriptions of a different faith are adopted it does not seem to imply a rejection of the prescriptions of your own faith. This vaguely explains the psychology not only of Akbar

⁴⁷ The orthodox Sufis made statements emphasizing the importance of spiritual development; by which they did not imply that the external observances were useless; some of these sentiments were expressed in symbolic language; some sayings were clothed in emphatic language, because those for whom they were intended were disciplined Sufis who had balanced views; however, in the hands of heterodox Sufis and poets they acquired a new meaning and had a serious impact upon the popular mind. For instance, *Khusraw's* orthodoxy was beyond doubt when he said:

کافر عشقم مسلمانی مرا در کار نیست
هر رگ من تار گشته حاجت زنا نیست

Love has converted me into an infidel, I no longer need Islam, Every vein in my body is a thread, I do not require the sacred thread of the Brahmin. His meaning was clear to the disciplined Sufis, but not to the populace. Also *Hāfiz*, e.g.,

زاهد و عجب و نماز و من و مستی و نیاز
تا ترا خود زمین با که عنایت باشد

The pious have their prayers and their pride,
I am drunk and humble,
Let us see which of us two
Will receive Thy grace.

⁴⁸ *Bābā Tāhir*, a well-known mystic Persian poet says (p. 5):
Guebres, or Nazarenes, or Musulmans,
Whatever our creed, our faith is Thine, and Thee.



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but of several other Muslims. Some confusion arose because of the prevailing belief in monism. If God manifests Himself through the entire creation, it is only another step for an untutored mind to conclude that He might manifest Himself in certain objects more fully than in the rest of the creation. One may find such an object to be an idol; another, like Akbar, having been familiar with the Qur'ānic simile of light, might erroneously think physical light to be the most conspicuous manifestation of God; and what greater light is there than the great luminary, the sun?

It cannot be held, however, that all this is Islam. Of course this is not orthodoxy; if Akbar had one pet aversion after his quarrel with Shaikh 'Abd-u'n-nabī, it was orthodoxy. He did not ask his followers to abjure Islam as has been wrongly asserted by some writers; but he did ask them to abjure the orthodox form of it.⁴⁹ However, what Akbar was willing to retain of Islam in the composition of his religious convictions was merely a parody of it even though Akbar did not think so; and this was the most dangerous aspect of the situation, because it is not easy to seduce people from their allegiance to their faith, but if that faith is so diluted with other religions that it loses its basic character, then it is sure to die out in course of time. This is what happened to Buddhism in the subcontinent. First it became the liberal school, the greater vehicle, capable of carrying more ideas than Hīnayāna, the orthodox school, then it degenerated into Tantric sects, and finally it faded out from the land of its birth.

The political situation from the point of view of orthodoxy was even worse. Islam in its orthodox form was still taught in the seminaries and preached from the pulpits where the 'ulamā did not depend for their livelihood upon the grants made by the State; but politically orthodoxy had been dethroned completely and it did not seem that it could capture power again. And there was a question lurking behind all this: with heterodoxy enthroned in the seat of power, with the growing strength of the non-Muslims, with the threat of subversion of its beliefs and ideals, could the Muslim community maintain its existence?

⁴⁹ This is obvious from fn. 44 *supra*.



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VII

The Revival of Orthodoxy

Orthodox Islam could not accept defeat so easily. It took some time in understanding the situation, but once the issues were clearly understood, the response was both intelligent and vigorous. It is not on record when, why, and to what extent Akbar himself began to lose interest in his religious experiments; the evidence regarding his complete abjuration of his heretical beliefs is inconclusive; but there seems to be little doubt that he did not pursue his inquiries or experiments actively after 1595, some time before the murder of his friend Abū-'l-Faḍl in 1602.¹ When Akbar died in 1605, the orthodox elements in the court were strong enough to foil the Rajput scheme of putting Khusraw on the throne and to secure a promise from Jahāngīr that he would restore the institutions of Islam which had fallen into abeyance under Akbar.² It was the fashion for some time to paint Jahāngīr as a besotted drunkard caring little for the government or for religion; one has only to read his memoirs to see that this picture was overdrawn. So long as his health permitted, he devoted himself assiduously to the affairs of the state; he also showed interest in religious matters to the extent of devoting time to meditation as well as to inquiry.³ His attachment to Islam is demonstrated by the fact that he debated with the learned doctors of the Hindu

¹ Blochmann, I, p. 221.

² *Cambridge History of India*, IV, p. 152.

³ Mu'tamad *Khān*, III, p. 193; Jahāngīr, pp. 9, 131, 232.

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faith, trying to show them their errors.⁴ There can thus be little doubt that orthodoxy had shown resilience and had recovered some lost ground.

However, it had to go a long way to become the dominant power again. The real challenge to it had not come from the vagaries of the opinions of a monarch, whatever harm this might have done to it, but from the spread of heterodox opinions amongst some sections of the Muslim population. Jahāngīr's adherence to orthodox beliefs was not the real remedy; the battle had to be fought on other fronts as well. Being deprived of the authority of the state, it could no longer seek easy solutions in the suppression of heretical or undesirable opinions. The need to win the hearts of the people through argument and spiritual training was thus brought home in a striking manner.

There must have been many minds which were convinced of such a need; but to one who became the torch-bearer of this movement, its realization did not come through an intellectual process. The spirit of every age speaks through a different language; in an atmosphere surcharged with mysticism, it was through mystic experience that the truth dawned upon Shaikh Ahmad of Sarhind.⁵ He had received formal

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14. This, however, did not result in intolerance. The emperor went to see a Hindu saint on foot and discussed with him Vedānta (*ibid.*, pp. 175, 176).

⁵ A short biographical account appears at the end of the collection of his letters (Sarhindī III, pp. 249, 250). His full name was Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindī al-Fāruqī a'n-Naqshbandī. He was born in 971 A.H. (1562-63). His father, Shaikh 'Abd-u'l-Aḥad, was a well known scholar and theologian. In his early age he joined the Qādiriyah *silsilah* under the discipleship of an accomplished mystic, Shāh Kamāl. His father, Shaikh 'Abd-u'l-Aḥad, taught him not only the subjects then included in the formal disciplines of education but also trained him as a mystic in the Chishtiyah *silsilah* and then gave him permission to accept others as his own disciples. At the age of seventeen, he had completed his education and made rapid strides in mystic attainments. Later he joined the Naqshbandī *silsilah* under the guidance of Khwājah Bāqī-bi'llah of Delhi, who thought highly of his spiritual capacities from the very beginning (for an account of Khwājah Bāqī-bi'llah see Hāshim). Then he embarked upon his mission of bringing about a renaissance of Islam. He was imprisoned by Jahāngīr in 1618 and released in the next year. The monarch changed his opinion of the *shaikh* when he had remained with him for some time after his release from the prison at Gwalior. He was given presents by the monarch, which indicates the change in his attitude. The *shaikh* died in 1024 A.H. (29 November 1624). There is a long note on him in Asadī-u'l-Hāshimī, I, pp. 607 *et seq.*



education of the highest standard available in those days. His writings show a deep understanding not only of Muslim theology, but also of philosophy. He was fully conversant with the writings of the Muslim mystics and was able to weigh every claim with remarkable clarity. However, it was not on his theoretical knowledge that his mission was based.⁶ The strangest factor in his convictions was that the most important of them, a rejection of monism, *waḥdat-u'l-wujūd*, was arrived at in spite of his deepest desire to the contrary.⁷ This and his sense of mission were alike based upon his mystic experience.

He completed his mystic training under the guidance of a famous saint, *Khawājah Bāqī-bi'llah* of Delhi, under whom he made remarkable progress.⁸ In the first flush of his ecstatic experience, he lost his balance a little and expressed his sentiments in poetry of a highly emotional strain and somewhat heretical trend.⁹ However, he sent what he wrote to his spiritual guide who corrected his exuberance by keeping him within the necessary discipline. This stage soon passed and there came greater balance in his ecstatic emotions; a little later he was startled by the realization of the truth that monism was experienced in a condition of ecstasy and was not the reality.¹⁰ This caused him considerable misery, because he had come to look upon the ecstatic realization of monism as the highest in mystic experience. He was afraid that the loss of this feeling was a falling away from the height of attainment; however, through his mystic experience, the conviction

⁸ Sarhindī, I, p. 411, Epistle 192.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 42, Epistle 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 411, Epistle 192.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 41, Epistle 31. The *shaiikh* wrote to *Khawājah Bāqī-bi'llah* the following lines:

اے دریغا کین شریعت ملت اعمای است
کفر و ایمان زلف و روئے آن پری زیبای است
ملت ما کافری و ملت ترسای است
کفر و ایمان هر دو اندر راه مایکتای است

Alas! this *Shari'at* is the faith of blindness.

Unbelief and belief are the tresses and the face of that beautiful fairy,
My faith is the faith of unbelievers and Christians.
Unbelief and belief are in our path in unison.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 41 *et seq.*, Epistle 31, pp. 411, Epistle 291.



grew in him that the experience of monism was not the highest stage and that the realization that monism was but the creation of ecstasy was higher in the field of mystic attainments.¹¹ From this conviction flowed many conclusions which, as we shall see, had a revolutionary effect upon the mystic thinking of the period.

The other experience was a vision which gave him his sense of mission. He attained the conviction that he held a very high position in the hierarchy of Muslim saints and that he was to bring about a renaissance of Islam.¹² When he made his vision public, he incurred the criticism of several contemporaries of great eminence and also the wrath of the Emperor Jahāngīr, who imprisoned him for what he considered to be extravagant claims likely to cause mischief.¹³ The *shaikh*, however, was not deterred from his work, nor was he ready to withdraw his claims. Jahāngīr's memoirs bear the evidence that the monarch changed his opinion of the *shaikh*;¹⁴ the esteem in which he is held by orthodox Islam today has vindicated his sense of destiny. There is no exaggeration in the statement that it was through his influence that Islamic mysticism increasingly became a supporter of orthodoxy. Its heretical branches shed their heterodoxy and began to seek identification with the accepted tenets of Islam. The *shaikh*'s influence spread into Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire in the west and Malaya and Indonesia in the east.¹⁵ He was hailed as the Mujaddid-i-alf-i-thānī, the one who had restored the pristine purity of the doctrine of Islam in the beginning of the second millennium of the history of Islam. Leading thinkers of orthodox Islam in the subcontinent have unanimously

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 14 *et seq.* His sense of mission is expressed strongly in a letter to Khwājah Muḥammad Ṣādiq (*ibid.*, I. p. 255).

¹³ Shāikh 'Abd-u'l-Haqq of Delhi wrote a strong letter (Nizāmī, *Ḥayāt-i-Shaikh 'Abd-u'l-Haqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī*; the letter is reproduced on p. 312 *et seq.*); Jahāngīr mentions Shaikh Aḥmad's claim in scathing language (p. 273).

¹⁴ Jahāngīr, pp. 308, 370.

¹⁵ This influence spread through the expansion of the Mujaddidiyah *silisilah* (Ihsan, part I, pp. 166-167). Another factor was that the Naqshbandi *silisilah* had already been strong in Central Asia. It was spread from Turkey to Indonesia (Pareja, II, p. 673).



accepted him as such.¹⁶

The doctrine of monism had a great hold upon the mind of the people at that time. India, through Vedānta, had a long tradition of belief in monism. Through the Bhakti movement it had percolated into the consciousness of the masses. It was accepted both by the mystics and the philosophers. Some of the greatest mystics among the Muslims had declared the experience of monism as the *summum bonum* of their attainment.¹⁷ The Mujaddid, therefore, had to explain his convictions and experience in philosophic terms. A belief such as the acceptance of monism as the highest mystic and philosophic truth could not be countered simply by the assertion that the Mujaddid's own experience had proved it false. He, therefore, had to think of a philosophic explanation, which should be based upon the concepts of the period and yet at least prove his contention to be feasible. To understand these arguments, and also because it added to the previous Sufic concepts, it is necessary to describe the Mujaddid's mystic progress, briefly described earlier, in somewhat greater detail.

He first attained the experience of monism, *waḥdat-u'l-wujūd* or *waḥdat-i-wujūdī*, in which he felt that he existed only in God and had no existence of his own. Then he advanced to a stage where he felt that his existence was a shadow of the existence of God, separate from His existence as the shadow is separate from the substance. This he called *ẓilliyat* or adumbration. He proceeded further in the development of his mystic consciousness until he felt that his existence was different from the existence of God, dependent upon God's

¹⁶ Great thinkers like Shāh Walī-u'llah refer to him as the Mujaddid-i-alf-i-thāni, though Shāh Walī-u'llah does not agree with him on the question of monism. One of the earliest writers to refer to Shaikh Ahmad as the Mujaddid-i-alf-i-thāni was Mullā 'Abd-u'l-Hakīm of Sialkot (Faruqi, p. 3.).

¹⁷ The classical example is of Hallāj who asserted his belief in monism in the words: "I am the Truth" (Massignon; I, p. xi). Dārā Shikūh has several verses with the same meaning, e.g.

قادری نیست جز قادر وحده لا شریک الا هو

Qādirī is none other than the Almighty,
He is one and there is none but Him.

Qādirī was Dārā Shikūh's *nom de plume*. The first line can also be translated as:

Qādirī, nothing exists except the Almighty.



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will for its being, subservient to God, yet separate. This was the true state, the state of *'ubūdīyat*, of subservience to God in separate existence. If he was separate, how had he felt unity with Him? The first experience was the result of his "intoxication"; because of his love for God and his intense longing, he had been so submerged in emotion that he had come to feel that he was not separate from Him. This is what he felt but that did not make it the reality; monism is not the reality, it is only a feeling, an experience. Hence the *waḥdat*, unity, is not *wujūdī*, in existence, but *shuhūdī*, in experience or feeling.¹⁸

He, through mystic experience, was convinced that this was the truth. However, if this was the truth, how could his own previous conviction and the conviction of other true and sincere mystics holding that monism was the reality be justified? The answer was that the intensity of the experience was no guarantee of its truth; not all mystic experience revealed the final truth. It, therefore, needed some criterion to establish its validity. This was further necessary because mystic experience was not limited to Islam; the Greeks, the Hindus and the followers of other faiths also had mystic consciousness and experience.¹⁹ Therefore, in view of the contradictions in their experience, mystic experience, by itself, could not be the criterion of spiritual truth. According to the Mujaddid, revelation alone is infallible and, therefore, provides the sole criterion of spiritual truth and, thus, of mystic experience; and because the Prophet was guided by revelation and was protected by God from error, therefore any vision which went against his guidance could be dismissed as the result of "intoxication".²⁰ This brings us to the classification of the mystic experience. The experience in a stage of ecstasy was not always reliable, because ecstasy was a condition of intoxication, where the intensity of emotion and depth of feeling were capable of playing tricks even with the mystic consciousness; the higher state was that of "sobriety", when the senses were sufficiently under control

¹⁸ The Mujaddid called it *waḥdat-u'sh-shuhūd*, Sarhindī, I, pp. 57 *et seq.*, Epistle 43, See also Ahmad.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 334, Epistle 266.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 375, Epistle 286.



to record upon the consciousness the true nature of the reality.²¹ This could be achieved only through long training and was the highest to which a sufi could aspire. Thus mystic experience is not denied; its verity is subjected to the condition that it should be arrived at in "sobriety" and not in a state of "intoxication"; true realization of the reality cannot go counter to the teachings of the Prophet.

It is not for a student of history to probe into the verities of the mystic vision of the reality, but the Mujaddid's findings are rational as well as in accordance with our knowledge of psychology. The Mujaddid's explanation of the Sufi's experience of monism is convincing to the modern mind when he says that the Sufi cultivates an intense love for God and is immersed in the desire for union with Him and that it is this desire and not a vision of the reality which gives him the feeling of unity with God to the extent that he experiences monism.²² The emotional intensity gives him an experience which is a reflex of his feelings and not of the reality. What some of the Sufis have said has been a true statement of their feelings but not necessarily of the reality. This does not detract from their greatness, because such an intensity of feeling is a great experience which is ennobling in itself. However, the heretical sayings of the Sufis should be dismissed as having been uttered in a state of intoxication.²³ These were revolutionary teachings and, if the Mujaddid himself had not been a Sufi, he would have been capable of subverting the entire Sufi thinking. The Mujaddid, however, recognized the value and importance of the mystic experience and was desirous of disciplining it so that it might not subvert the Faith through its imbalance. The Mujaddid insisted that he had not reached these conclusions through any rational thinking himself and had been granted this knowledge through mystic experience;²⁴ therefore, he established a new branch of the Naqshbandiyah *silsilah*, known as the Mujaddidiyah. The Naqshbandiyah order was itself based more upon "sobriety" than "intoxication".

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 108, Epistle 84.

²² *Ibid.*, I, p. 42, Epistle 31.

²³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 108, Epistle 84.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 411, Epistle 192.



Important as were the Mujaddid's conclusions regarding the classification and validity of the mystic experience, the cornerstone of his philosophy was the rejection of monism. He had to counter it philosophically as well, because the monism of the Sufis had also found intellectual justification. Though not known by that name, monism can be traced in the thought of the early Greek thinkers and since then has existed in the schools of thought which were influenced by Greece. The Muslims became familiar with monistic ideas and the Sufis, specially Ibn-u'l-'Arabī, utilised them extensively in explaining their mystic understanding of reality in the terms of philosophy.²⁵ Monism, whether intellectual or mystic, materialistic or idealistic, is based upon the desire to bring about a sense of harmony between man and other existence; it gives a feeling of order in a universe that otherwise would seem chaotic and confusing. To the theist this consciousness of order in the universe is of great value and satisfaction. The intense God-consciousness which is the basis of Sufism, therefore, accepts monism with avidity and conviction. The Mujaddid was faced with a difficult task when he began his campaign against monism. If there is no final validity in mystic experience except in so far as it is confirmed by the revelation to the Prophet, why should the Sufi accept the Mujaddid's vision as more valid than his own or at least than the visions of the great Sufis held in universal esteem? The Qur'ān and the Prophet did not indulge in such metaphysical discussions as would confirm or reject monism. The orthodox theologians rejected monism and based their views upon an interpretation of the Qur'ān; this interpretation was not accepted by the Sufis. Thus a reference to the Qur'ān and the Prophet was not of much use.

The only method left to the Mujaddid was that of rational argument. In this he was handicapped by the fact that, as a monotheist believing creation, whether material or spiritual,

²⁵ Short accounts of Muḥyī-u'd-dīn Ibn-u'l-'Arabī are available in Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, pp. 399-404, and Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 77-182. He was born at Murcia in Spain in 1165 and died in Damascus in 1261. He was a voluminous writer and in his lifetime some considered him a saint and others called him a heretic. The Mujaddid mentions him with respect but refutes his theories. See also Landau.



to be finite in time and, therefore, not existing in the same manner as God, he could not believe that God and His creation existed in the same sense. To the monist the explanation is simple; all that seems to exist does not exist in reality, being only a manifestation of the real existence which is God. In other words all that exists exists in God, outside Whom it could not exist. Hence Existence is One, and there is no other existence. The Mujaddid replied by saying that existence is of several kinds. God's existence is unique, being self-sustaining, infinite, and timeless. Its complete antithesis is non-existence. God's attributes exist in Him but are not a part of His existence because He can exist without any of these attributes. By God's will some attribute of His (but not His existence) casts a reflection upon the corresponding aspect of non-existence; this mixture of existence and non-existence brings into being a dependent or subservient existence which can continue for such time as the reflection is not withdrawn; during the time that it continues it has its own separate individuality and is not a part of God's existence.²⁶

Philosophically this explanation is more difficult to understand than the simpler theory of monism; even when conceded, this subservient existence was generally understood to be of the nature of an emanation of the real existence. As such it seemed hardly to affect the validity of monism. This is the reason why the Mujaddid's views on monism were not accepted by a large number of Sufis. Among others Shāh Walī-u'llah of Delhi held that the Mujaddid's dissent from monism was but a matter of semantics.²⁷ This was not the view of the Mujaddid who has devoted a good deal of space to the discussion of his points of difference with Ibn-u'l-'Arabī.²⁸ Whatever might be said about the philosophic content of the Mujaddid's theory, its moral consequences cannot be ignored. Monism results in quietism; the emphasis upon a separate existence leads to the opposite. A real belief in monism can

²⁶ *Ibid.*, II, p. 6, Epistle 1.

²⁷ Shāh Walī-u'llah, *Faiṣalatu waḥdat-i'l-wajud wa'sh-shuhud*, p. 7.

²⁸ Sarhindī, II, pp. 1-3, Epistle 1. This epistle reproduces the main arguments of Ibn-u'l-'Arabī and then explains how the Mujaddid's views differed from Ibn-u'l-'Arabī's.



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hardly create a sense of responsibility for one's own actions; a separate ego has its responsibility as well as destiny. Monism tends to ignore the differences between religious philosophies and codes of behaviour; it is fatal for a community which believes in its uniqueness and must maintain its separate identity or perish. In later times Iqbal was a strong critic of the theory of monism.

The importance of the Mujaddid's campaign against monism was recognized by those circles in the subcontinent who were believers in the essential identity of Islam and Vedanta, like Dara Shikūh.²⁹ Apart from this conviction, which was not shared by the orthodox Sufis, it seemed to some of the mystics that the recognition of separate existence in the creation compromised the doctrine of monotheism. The Mujaddid had countered this doubt by saying that the Muslim creed is "there is no god but God" and not "there exists nothing but God", yet his opponents unscrupulously went on talking of monotheism and monism in the same breath and using identical terms for both as if they were one.³⁰ For instance Dārā Shikūh invariably used the word *tawḥīd*—monotheism—for monism. He used harsh epithets for those who rejected monism. His ire was due to the fact that the common ground between Vedānta and Sufism was provided by monism alone; take out monism from Sufism and the resemblance with Vedānta ceases to exist. And this struck against the most cherished belief of the prince and others of his way of thinking. Without monism, the Bhakti saints and the Muslim Sufis would find it difficult to speak a common language.

All this did not worry the Mujaddid because it was his mission to prevent the teachings of Islam from being diluted

²⁹ Dārā Shikūh, in his preface to *Sirr-i-akbar*, his translation of fifty-two Upanishads, condemns those who did not accept the doctrine of monism in the following words: "The ignorant people of this age who call themselves learned indulge in polemics and want to persecute gnostics and monothesis, contradict the truth of monotheism which is apparent from the holy Qur'ān and the true authentic traditions of the Prophet and thus constitute themselves highwaymen in the path of God". (Reproduced in original in Hasrat, 261, 262). The Mujaddid anticipated this confusion between monism and monotheism, Sarhindī, I, pp. 343, 344, Epistle 272).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 133, Epistle 111.



into mere monist theism by making common cause with Hinduism. The Muslim community and the purity of the Islamic doctrine could endure only by stressing their separate entity and uniqueness. The disciplined *silsilahs* had not permitted monism to degenerate into laxity and heresy, but there was no dearth of lax and heretical Sufis.³¹ Monism supplied them all the nourishment they needed. In the growth of heterodoxy, monism had played an important part. Even in such crude manifestations as Akbar's reverence for the sun and fire, monism played its rôle, because to Akbar's mind the sun was the manifestation of God as light and as the giver of sustenance and preserver of life.³² Monism as an ecstatic feeling is far different from monism in worship, because the latter has all the germs of degenerating into animism, idolatry, and polytheism. And this is what had been happening in certain sections of Muslim society in the subcontinent.

The rejection of monism was the great need of the age and provided the basic diagnosis of the disease from which Islam was suffering at that time. When seen in the perspective of history, whether accepted by the Sufis or not, it is on the rejection of monism that Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi's claim for being the Mujaddid of the age is based. Immediately, however, his insistence on the principles that the criterion of a true vision is its accordance with the tenets of Islam and that all visions in a state of "intoxication" are not trustworthy had greater influence, because the disciplined Sufis had even before accepted this position.³³

His other teachings were not revolutionary, because they were the reaffirmation of the teachings of orthodox Islam. His method of propagating his views was that he wrote a large number of epistles explaining his views to his followers, disciples, admirers and friends among the dignitaries of the state. His disciples also worked in the imperial camp and the Mughul army. There seems to be some truth in the state-

³¹ *Supra*, chapters V and VI.

³² *Badā'ūnī*, II, p. 261.

³³ Shaikh 'Abd-u'l-Haqq's letter to the Mujaddid was written with that conviction. The Mujaddid says about his predecessors in the Naqshbandi *silsilah* that they applied the criterion of *shar'* to all their mystic experience (Sarhindi, I, p. 144, Epistle 131).



ment that Jahāngīr's attention was first drawn to him at the representation of Āṣaf Khān that the Mujaddid's men were working in the army.³⁴ The Mujaddid's incarceration gave him more time for meditation and also provided him with the much needed opportunity of influencing the Emperor. The Mujaddid had a large number of harsh things to say against Akbar,³⁵ but he did not criticize Jahāngīr, perhaps because he noticed in the monarch a desire to set matters right. He exhorted his friends in the court to see that all the institutions of Islam including the *jizyah* were restored.³⁶ The political situation had so changed that the emperor and his orthodox courtiers considered it risky to go too far in their zeal for Islam; as men of the world they were not indifferent to the dangers imminent in pursuing policies which might result in the alienation of Hindu sentiment.

The Mujaddid's influence continued to work after him. He had trained a number of workers who held aloft the torch. Besides, there were other scholars of eminence who devoted themselves to the creation of a better understanding of Islam. The foremost of these was Shaiikh 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq of Delhi who is famous as a writer on *ḥadith*.³⁷ The results of their work can be seen in the policies of the next two reigns. Historians have generally treated these changes in policies as the outcome of the personal whims of the monarchs. They have failed to discern in them any trace of the influence of the environment. Just as an Akbar would have been impossible but for the long history of the Bhakti movement, both Shāh Jahān and 'Alamgīr I could not have thrived without a change in public sentiment. This change was brought about by the work of the Mujaddid. It has been seen that Jahāngīr came to the throne with a predilection for orthodox Islam; still this was a far cry from pre-Akbar days. Now the non-Muslims and non-orthodox sections of the Muslims were entrenched in a position of strength and it was only within certain very definite limits that the Emperor could

³⁴ *Iḥsān*, part I, pp. 170-174.

³⁵ There are several epistles condemning the policies of Akbar, e.g., *Sarhindī*, I, p. 106, Epistle, 81; pp. 64-66, Epistle 47, etc.

³⁶ *Ibid.* There are several letters to that effect.

³⁷ He was born at Delhi in 1551 and died at the ripe age of 91 years in 1642. For his life see Nizāmī, *Ḥayāt-i-Shaiikh 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī*.



act in the interests of orthodoxy. Jahangīr, therefore, moved with extreme caution. When he lost his health and the real power came into the hands of Nur Jahān, it could not be expected that she, being a Shī'ah, would make any effort to revive the influence of orthodoxy in the affairs of the state. Her interest in Islam was demonstrated through her pious deeds, but politically she felt too insecure to offend any powerful group in the empire.

Shāh Jahān was orthodox in his leanings as well as his beliefs and he took some measures to show that orthodoxy was back in power. For instance he imposed the Islamic law that no idol temple could be built without the permission of the state. It is obvious that such a rule could not be imposed with any thoroughness in an overwhelmingly Hindu region and was more an assertion of a principle than an effective measure, but the intentions of the monarch were demonstrated in his order for the demolition of a few unauthorized temples.³⁸ Their number was small and the measure was more a declaration that Islam would again be treated as the dominant religion rather than an attempt at the suppression of Hinduism. Shah Jahān's orthodoxy was demonstrated in another way. The rulers of Golconda had, for thirty years, read the *khutbah* in the name of the Ṣafawī monarchs of Iran.³⁹ The Mughuls could hardly permit the expansion of the influence of a rival dynasty along their southern marches; besides, their policies in the subcontinent were definitely expansionist. Therefore, Shāh Jahan forced the sultan to include his name in the *khutbah* and to remove the reference to the Ṣafawī shah. The dynasty of Golconda was Shī'ite and the *khutbah* as well as the coinage had certain Shī'ah formulae; this fact gave Shāh Jahān's action a religious tinge. When he insisted that his name should be included in the *khutbah* as well as the coinage, he also ordered that the objectionable Shī'ah references should be removed. If coins coupling his name with Shī'ah formulae had circulated in any part of the realm, it would have created difficulties for him. These measures, therefore, were dictated mainly by political considerations;

³⁸ *Cambridge History of India*, IV, p. 217.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 197.



yet they demonstrate both the power which orthodoxy had regained and Shah Jahān's personal predilections.

Shāh Jahan's policy was tempered with a regard for the feelings of his supporters and, therefore, he did not push his orthodoxy in matters of state to the point of provoking determined opposition from any group. Besides, his partiality for Dārā Shikūh maintained some balance between the orthodox groups and their opponents.

Dārā Shikūh promised to be another Akbar; he was regarded as the heir apparent and was given a say in the affairs of the state that often nullified the efforts of the orthodox group. Therefore, those who were opposed to orthodoxy could feel secure and also look forward to a time when they would be in control of the government. The orthodox had their hopes centred in Awrangzib who was not only orthodox in his beliefs and practices but also a puritan. His piety and character left nothing to be desired in a prince who would gather around himself the well-wishers of orthodoxy. In addition he was the ablest of the sons of the monarch, cool and courageous in face of danger, an efficient administrator, and a good general. In spite of a similarity in religious inclinations, Shāh Jahān did not look with favour upon Awrangzib; even in matters of policy he often chose perversely to baulk the prince.⁴⁰ The orthodox group had everything to fear if Dārā Shikūh came to the throne, because all they had achieved since the last days of Akbar would be undone. Dārā Shikūh was a firm believer in the identity of Hinduism and Islam and had written several volumes to prove his point.⁴¹ The main difference between Akbar and him would have been that whereas Akbar's mind was not disciplined through formal education, Dārā Shikūh was a competent scholar. Thus he could injure the interests of orthodoxy more seriously. The opponents of orthodoxy could not hope to receive any encouragement from Awrangzib. From the point of view of the orthodox, no other prince had the qualities of Awrangzib or the capacity to win against Dārā Shikūh, because the latter was in control of the resources of the state. It was obvious that the next struggle would be between

⁴⁰ For a full discussion see Nadwī, Najib Ashraf, pp. 203-233.

⁴¹ Hasrat, pp. 210 *et seq.*



Awrangzib and Dārā Shikūh, and that the two princes did not just represent their own interests but stood for two different principles. Shāh Jahān's illness provided the occasion and the war of succession began. Character and ability overcame resources and numbers; Awrangzib emerged victorious.⁴² Dārā Shikūh paid with his life for his heterodoxy.⁴³ This was the hour of triumph for orthodoxy.

And yet complete victory was not possible. The circumstances had changed and orthodoxy was confronted with a stupendous task. Even with such an able monarch at the helm of affairs as Awrangzib 'Ālamgīr I, a man imbued with the devotion of a martyr, it was difficult to enthrone orthodoxy again in the Empire. The dissenting elements had become too powerful to be dislodged from their vantage points, and without their cooperation the policies of the state could not be fully implemented. The demolition of a few unauthorized temples was a comparatively simple matter. It was resented, but it did not result in any breach of the peace or revolt. It was spectacular but futile; it did not solve any problems, but only added to them. Men's minds are not logical to the extent of excluding resentment at the demolition of a place of worship even if it is unauthorized. In any case the law requiring the permission of the state for the construction of a temple did not accord with the sense of justice of the people whose temples were demolished. Even today it is forgotten that 'Ālamgīr I's government made numerous grants to Hindu places of worship for their maintenance, but the demolition of a few temples is still remembered.⁴⁴ At that time it could not have added to the affection of the people for the government. In any case orthodoxy demonstrated publicly that it was in command. In another field 'Ālamgīr I had to face greater difficulties. The reimposition of the *jizyah* was not easy, especially because the Hindu revenue staff did not extend its full cooperation to the monarch in this

⁴² *Cambridge History of India*, IV, p. 210 et seq.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 227.

⁴⁴ Jnān Chandra, "Aurangzib and Hindu Temples", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Karachi, October 1957, pp. 247-254. This article shows that 'Ālamgīr I's government supported Hindu temples. The orders regarding the demolition of certain temples are discussed in *Cambridge History of India*, IV, p. pp. 241, 242.



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matter.⁴⁵ With tremendous effort and no spectacular gains to the treasury, he did succeed in enforcing his order. The laws of Islam as understood in those days by the orthodox were now established once again. Among the classes affected adversely, the reimposition of *jizyah* was not popular, but they seemed to acquiesce. It was not expected that after the people had been used to its abolition they would all at once welcome the reimposition of *jizyah*; given time, however, they might have become reconciled to it. At that time, therefore, it seemed that the hands of the clock had turned the full circle; the old times were back and orthodoxy was again seated in the place of authority with the support of those who believed in it and had fought for it.

This was a mere delusion, because in the wake of the conflict came a moral crisis of such proportions that it brought the work of centuries crashing down to destruction. It would be wrong to blame orthodoxy for the disaster; indeed it should be given credit for endeavours to stem the tide. The reasons for the decline and fall of the Muslim Empire were complex and multifarious; orthodoxy, however, shares the blame with other sections of Indian Islam for its failure to identify itself with the other sects in an effort to save the heritage of the Muslims from collapse. At that time it was difficult for orthodoxy to realize that its interests could be different from the general welfare of Islam or for the dissidents to understand that orthodoxy was basically trying to fight the battle of Islam.

For this the previous history of the struggle was responsible. It has been noticed how under Akbar circumstances threw the dissident Muslim sects and non-Muslims together against orthodoxy. It is the weakness of every dominant sect to identify itself with the faith; besides, in this instance orthodoxy was fighting with its back to the wall. There is little doubt that Akbar's policy was not based upon favouring any particular sect; a good deal of what he did was repugnant to the Shi'ahs and the Sunnis alike; yet it was only the Sunnis who resented the monarch's lapse from the teachings of Islam. It was they who foresaw the disastrous effects of Akbar's heterodoxy;

⁴⁵ The monarch spoke of his difficulties in reimposing the *jizyah* (Khawāfi Khān, II, p. 378).



it was they who struggled against it. The restoration of orthodoxy to power could not be viewed with enthusiasm by the Shi'ahs because of the history of hostility between the two sects in many countries. To the Shi'ahs the issues were not defined so sharply; they did not see the struggle of orthodoxy as a battle for Islam. It is not easy to see problems in a perspective other than the one to which one has been used. Neither the orthodox nor the dissidents realized how necessary co-operation with one another would be in the final struggle. When the realization did come, it was too late. Once the realization had come that the struggle was much more basic than merely an effort for the restoration of orthodoxy, the Sunnis should have been ready to make greater efforts to win the Shi'ahs over to their side and to wean them from their alliances with the non-Muslims. This effort was made but only when Islam had become politically too weak. In fairness to the Shi'ahs, it must be admitted that in the beginning the orthodox movement was directed as much against them as against the dominance of the non-Muslims in the councils of the Empire.⁴⁶ The movement aimed at the moral regeneration of the Muslims and at freeing them from un-Islamic influences also sought to fight Shi'ism. This made it impossible for the Shi'ahs to cooperate with the orthodox or to look upon their movement as an endeavour to save Islam.

Thus the issues were confused and Islam was a house divided against itself. It was not able to muster all its resources; indeed the Muslims were fighting against one another for narrow loyalties, unable to unite under a single flag. If they lost the empire and suffered, it was partly due to their inability to create an understanding amongst themselves.

⁴⁶ There are several epistles regarding the Shi'ahs in Sarhindi. The Mujaddid also wrote a treatise against the doctrines of the Shi'ah faith. *Risalah-i-rafawid*, which has been published along with the *Maktubāt*.



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VIII

The Decline of Political Power

'Ālamgīr I died in 1707; after his death the Mughul Empire began to decline rapidly. In fifty years' time the representatives of a company of foreign traders defeated the viceroy of the richest province of the Empire and gained control over its government and resources. A hundred years later the last Mughul emperor, not even a shadow of the glory of his forefathers, was a prisoner being tried for rebellion against the power of these very merchants. The textbooks are full of the causes of this rapid decline; it has been the fashion to consider the religious policy of 'Ālamgīr I mainly responsible for bringing down the noble edifice of the world's most resplendent empire. This is an error and an oversimplification.

The orthodox party, it is true, pressed its advantage too far and, in its moment of triumph, did not show that circumspection which was demanded by the times. At a time when the empire had to fight the Hindu Marathas and the Shī'ah sultanates of the Deccan, it was necessary to follow more conciliatory policies and not to give any offence to the sentiments of the followers of these beliefs by the adoption of new measures. The emperor should have known that Iran was trying to exploit the religious sentiments of the Shī'ahs by inciting them to take advantage of the difficulties of the Mughul

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Empire.¹ The emperor's endeavours to keep his Hindu and Shi'ah servants loyal were limited to the personal level of safeguarding their interests. He rejected requests for preferment from people who wanted to use their orthodoxy to oust others from their positions.² This, however, was not enough, and a more popular appeal to rally all the loyal elements was required. When this is conceded, it amounts to saying that one of the causes of the downfall of the empire was the failure of the emperor to secure better cooperation from the non-Sunni sections of the empire. It should, however, be remembered that it was not easy to secure that cooperation. 'Ālamgīr had come to the throne as the avowed champion of orthodoxy. The centre of the affections of the dissident groups was Dārā Shikūh. When 'Ālamgīr tried to win over the leading lights of the opposite camp, the response was not encouraging³ and the emperor had to lean more and more upon the support of the orthodox elements, who had little love for those whom they considered to be responsible for the difficulties of the reign of Akbar. It is, therefore, doubtful if a more sustained effort would have succeeded; even so it should have been made.

A good deal of the criticism levelled against 'Ālamgīr I is not sound. For instance when it is said that he should not have provoked a war with the sultanates of Golconda and Bijapur

¹ Qazwīnī, pp. 3, 13; also Nadwī, Saiyid Najīb Ashraf, pp. 275-278.

² Sandilawī, pp. 57-59, quoting in full a letter from 'Ālamgīr I.

³ Jasvant Singh had been sent by Dārā Shikūh to stop Murād from proceeding north-wards; he was defeated by Awrangzīb and Murād at Dharmat (Khawāfī Khān, II, pp. 11-18). At Sāmūgarh Dārā's army had a large proportion of Rājputs, who fought desperately and showed more than professional zeal in his cause (*ibid.*, pp. 26-28). While Shāh Jahān was still intriguing with his other sons against Awrangzīb, the Hindus of Muttra created trouble in the hope of causing embarrassment to the prince (Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Aurangzib*, III, pp. 20, 21). Jai Singh and Jasvant Singh were forgiven by 'Ālamgīr I. While he was victorious, the Rājputs did not see much point in openly opposing him. However, when 'Ālamgīr I faced Shāh Shujā'at Khajwah, Jasvant Singh and his Rājputs made a treacherous attack during the night upon 'Ālamgīr's troops and after plundering part of the camp marched off from the scene (Kāzīm, pp. 253-255). This, as Todd tells us, was done in the interests of Dārā, 'Ālamgīr I once again forgave him. At Ajmer where Dārā made practically the last stand of the campaign, even Jai Singh's son, Kunwar Rām Singh, went over to Dārā Shikūh's side. 'Ālamgīr, once again, forgave Rām Singh as well (Nadwī, Najīb Ashraf, p. 477). The rebellions show the general Hindu sentiment towards 'Ālamgīr. When he was firmly established as emperor, the Rājput nobles made their peace, but they did not give up their dislike of him.



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and should have concentrated upon the Marathas, the fact is ignored that these sultanates through their weakness had become the arsenal for the Maratha forces. The sultanates were incapable of even keeping peace within their territories. The Marathas got their sinews of war by plundering them. Besides, the sultanates, in spite of the growth of Maratha power at their expense, were secretly in alliance with them and helped them with money and supplies.⁴ The situation in Golconda was even worse because the real power was in the hands of two Brahmin officials, Madannā and Akannā, whose obnoxious rule was resented by the Muslim population of the sultanate and who were even more enthusiastic supporters of the Marathas.⁵ Under such circumstances it would have been foolish to leave the sultanates alone.

The war with the Marathas was an absolute necessity. Again and again tribal elements, bound together by the bonds of blood and common interests, have discovered the military weakness of great empires. In the old days the cumbersome armies of mighty powers often found it difficult to cope with the guerrilla activities of more mobile and less encumbered tribal hordes. The Mughul armies had permitted themselves to become clumsy and cumbersome;⁶ the Marathas had discovered their potentialities in their rebellious activities against the sultanate of Bijapur, which failed to curb them until they became a source of danger to settled government wherever they cared to carry their depredations. When they encroached upon the territories of the Mughul Empire, it was necessary to deal with them. First the emperor tried conciliation but it was difficult to tame the adventurous spirit of Shivaji, who found that the service of the Great Mughul could not be so profitable as plunder. The religious policies of the Mughul emperor would not have made any difference to the Marathas, who would have come into conflict with the empire irrespective of whether it was 'Ālamgīr I or Dārā Shikūh who sat upon

⁴ Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Aurangzib*, IV (Calcutta, 1919), pp. 330-305.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 335. Madannā grew so unpopular that he was murdered by the nobles (*ibid.*, pp. 350, 351). His brother Akannā shared the same fate (*ibid.*).

⁶ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 58-61.



the throne of Delhi. If Akbar had to deal with Mahārānā Pratāp of Udaipur, Dārā Shikūh would have had to deal with Shivājī, for it should be remembered that it was not because of any religious policies pursued by the rulers of Bijapur that Shivājī came into conflict with them. His father Shāhji was a noble of the court of Bijapur and the highest honours in the service of that state were open to Shivājī, but he did not care for them. In his choice of setting himself up as a rebel chief, Shivājī had certainly not been goaded on by the religious intolerance of any ruler.

It is, therefore, wrong to argue that the Maratha avalanche was brought on by 'Ālamgīr's policies. And a good many of his troubles had their source in the war with the Marathas. The ambitions of Shivājī, prompted by the weakness of the Deccan sultanates, raised a tide of anarchy which first engulfed them and then the Mughul Empire. Shivājī's depredations made the first serious impact on the peace of the sultanates in the middle of the seventeenth century;⁷ the forces of anarchy were not finally curbed until 1818 when the British rooted out the Pindaris.⁸ Thus it took the better part of two centuries for the avalanche to exhaust itself. Peace was restored partly because the people were tired and cooperated with the rising power of the British and partly because the British armies had outdistanced the native methods of warfare through better arms and discipline. In the time of 'Ālamgīr the disruptive forces were fresh and vigorous and therefore more difficult to combat.

The Muslim Empire had endured in the subcontinent for several centuries. The orthodox laws of Islam had been imposed with varying degrees of thoroughness. 'Ālamgīr I did not bring into existence a new set of laws. In the course

⁷ Shivājī started his career as a rebel in 1646 (Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Aurangzib*, IV, pp. 25). A succinct and interesting account of Shivājī, apart from the larger biographies, is contained in Lane-Poole, pp. 155-168.

⁸ The Pindaris were organized bands of robbers who took advantage of the anarchic conditions and terrorized the countryside. They were in alliance with the Marathas whose methods they had adopted. They were so numerous that the British had to organize a full-scale war to deal with them. An interesting and readable account is contained in Beveridge, III, p. 45. *et seq.*; Thornton, IV, pp. 402 ff., has a fuller account of the Pindaris and the campaign against them.



of these centuries the *jizyah* had remained in abeyance only for a period of one hundred and fifteen years.⁹ The order for the demolition of unauthorized temples had been given under Shāh Jahān and 'Ālamgīr did not enforce it for the first time.¹⁰ If the Empire collapsed like a house of cards after the death of 'Ālamgīr I, the main causes must be sought elsewhere than in the religious policies of that emperor, though these also played some role in its disintegration.

The most obvious reason was that Akbar had changed the nature of the polity profoundly. The Muslims were still the dominant group in the state, but it had ceased to be a Muslim Empire. It was no longer enshrined in their affections as their main responsibility. The identity of views and interests between the community and the monarch was gone; he was no more as dependent upon their support as other sultans had been. Now the Muslims were only one of the communities in the empire which controlled the councils and the armed might of the state. In the beginning they saw with satisfaction and even pride that the Hindu had started "wielding the sword of Islam";¹¹ they soon learnt that the sword would not always be wielded in the interests of Islam. Akbar had so weakened Islam through his policies that it could not be restored to its dominant position in the affairs of the state. Tolerance and abdication of power are not the same; tolerance and conciliation of the Hindus had been the policy of the previous dynasties as well, but they had accorded greater importance to the interests of Islam than to the endeavour to identify the state with the entire population. Akbar had strengthened his dynasty but made it subservient to interests other than those of Islam to a remarkable degree, so that it took three generations to restore the laws of Islam to their previous position.

Empires which are established by a numerically inferior community over a larger population always find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. They endure only so long as they

⁹ Abolished by Akbar in 1564, and reimposed by 'Ālamgīr I in 1679.

¹⁰ *Cambridge History of India*, IV. pp. 87, 242.

¹¹ Mullā Sherī, a contemporary of Akbar, has a poem in which the following line occurs;

که هندو می زند شمشیر اسلام

that the Hindu wields the sword of Islam, (Badā'ūnī, II, p. 233).



can maintain the delicate balance between dominance and surrender. The difficulty with surrender is that it does not succeed unless it is complete. Akbar gave away so much, yet he was not able to reconcile the Hindu sentiment completely. Mahārānā Pratāps were more representative of Hindu sentiment than Mān Singhs. They always are, because conciliation, however deep, never takes the sting away from the sense of racial or national humiliation of the subject people. The best that such polities can achieve is the neutrality of large masses of people by looking after their interests. This is what the sultanate had achieved through its agrarian policies, its encouragement of trade, its employment of Hindu soldiers and officers, its creation of a class of Hindu bureaucrats and liberal treatment of Hindu vassals.¹² If such an empire seeks the active cooperation of the politically conscious groups among the subject people, it must be extremely cautious. Akbar tipped the balance just sufficiently to make it certain that the equilibrium could be maintained in future only through making concessions that would make Muslim domination more and more difficult.

The community also lost its sense of solidarity by the importation of the Shi'ahs from Iran, because sectarian and group jealousies began to undermine the unity of the Muslims. The lesson of rising above sectarian differences is not easy to learn and even more difficult to practise; by bringing heterogeneous elements into the body politic, the Mughuls enriched the cultural life of the community and added to the administrative talent in their government, but they also created problems. It is true that different racial groups had been brought into the subcontinent by previous rulers as well but they were soon absorbed into the local Muslim community. In those days of religious animosity introducing a different sect and giving it a position of power in the government was to add to the future difficulties of the state.¹³ The Mughuls failed to see the advantages of having as homogeneous a body of supporters as their Muslim neighbours, the Şafawis of Iran and the Uzbeks of

¹² Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, pp. 219-228.

¹³ Under Jahāngir at a time when the Empress Nūr Jahān had almost supreme authority, I'timād-u'd-dawlah, the chief minister, and Āsaf Khān, the premier noble, were both Shi'ahs.



Turkestan, possessed. They failed to see that in the ultimate analysis their power could be safely entrenched only in the deep loyalty of the Muslim community. They could get as much support as they liked from heterogeneous elements while they prospered, but in times of stress, only the Muslim community would come to their help. It was, therefore, a mistake to weaken it by introducing into it elements of internal strife and providing a rival to its dominance by setting up Hindus as the equals of Muslims in the government. It was natural that a tradition should grow up of cooperation between the Shi'ahs and the Hindus against the major section of the Muslim community. This in turn created bad blood between the majority of the Muslims on the one hand and the rest of the politically conscious sections of the population on the other. There is an element of strife within every state that contains mutually hostile groups; the Mughuls made it more acute in their empire by following policies which sought to derive advantage from these differences. *Divide et impera* works well only where the rulers are not irrevocably identified with one group as the Mughuls were with the Muslims in the popular mind.

In seeking support from dissident elements Akbar only weakened the foundations of his empire. It is true that he succeeded in becoming a monarch in almost the literal sense of the word, because by balancing delicately the two rival groups he gathered all authority into his hands, but he failed to realize that he was sowing the seeds of trouble for the future. A polity can endure only if it can depend upon the support of a strong and dominant group; destroy that group or its power and the polity will, at the first impact of an adverse wind, collapse like a house of cards. This is precisely what happened to the Mughul Empire.

It would have collapsed much earlier if it had not had at the helm of affairs, when the challenge came, a man of the calibre of 'Ālamgīr I. On the one hand he tried to rally the orthodox party by giving it support and encouragement to strengthen the state and, on the other, he fought on with an indomitable will, in spite of old age, in the face of great odds, laboriously conquering one fort after another, unbending



before the gravest discouragement, unable to rely upon many of his officers, with treason stalking in his camp and even among his own progeny, and, towards the end, conscious of the impending disaster but refusing to bow before it.¹⁴ It was the soul of a martyr which went on struggling within his frail and bent frame. The miniature painters have preserved for posterity a record more eloquent than the words of any historian. Leaning upon his staff, unable to stand erect, with determination writ large upon his features, the old emperor stands upon the battlefield personally directing the onslaught.¹⁵ He might have succeeded, in fact he almost did succeed; he failed only because the scales had been too heavily tipped against him by Akbar, and Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān did not possess that grit of character which alone could have put the ship of state on an even keel.

It may be argued with great justice that Akbar set standards of liberalism unheard of in those days. This is true; it is also true that the main glory of the Mughul Empire in the perspective of history is its tolerance and liberalism, if we forget that Akbar was unfair to the faith of his forefathers; but it should also be remembered that this liberalism was not tempered with sufficient realism to see that it should not pull the edifice down. And what was the net result? A hundred years of extreme liberalism brought in its wake two centuries of anarchy. If the masses of the subcontinent had been saved the miseries of anarchy, loot and plunder for two centuries, perhaps a little less liberalism would have justified itself. Two centuries of anarchy were followed by British rule which was after all not so liberal until towards the end. The masses of the subcontinent were made to pay a heavy price for the

¹⁴ In a letter to Muḥammad A'zam, written during the last moments of his life, the emperor says: "Life is not likely to last; there is no trace of the past left; there is no hope for the future" (Nadwī, Najīb Ashraf, p. 121). During his last illness when he knew that he was about to die, he wrote to an officer: "During the short period of my past life I have not acted against what I have said: God willing, up to the day of my journey to the eternal world, there will be no variance between what I say and what I do" (*ibid.*, p. 120).

¹⁵ There are numerous miniatures of this description extant. One is in the Lahore Museum and was reproduced in *Māh-i-Naw*, Karachi, May 1957, p. 88. In this picture there is a variation: the Emperor is carried on a *takht-i-rawān*, "a moving throne".



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advancement of a few Hindu nobles and the importation of some Iranis. It should be remembered that the question of the people being associated with the government did not arise at that time. If the Muslim community had been persuaded to part with its power in favour of the whole people, whatever the disadvantages to the community, the sacrifice would have been worth making; but this was simply abdication in favour of groups much less liberal in their outlook than the Muslim rulers.¹⁶ It should also be remembered that today the Shi'ahs are a valuable element in the Muslim community because a history of common suffering has integrated them into the general body of the Muslims and because in the modern context sectarian differences have lost their importance, but in those days the situation was entirely different.

The truth of these observations can be gauged from the happenings after the death of 'Ālamgīr I. He had crushed the Maratha power sufficiently to enable his successors, if they had been endowed with the same qualities of perseverance, to control the situation; but 'Ālamgīr I was succeeded by men who did not possess his determination. They most short-sightedly failed to take a serious view of the Maratha menace. The rift between the Shi'ahs and the Sunnis increased, until it was impossible to hope for a concerted attack upon anarchy. The Marathas were invited to the capital and through the folly of the Saiyids of Bārahah became all-powerful in the land. This would show that orthodoxy and 'Ālamgīr I were fighting for much more than appeared to many outsiders. The issues were confused; the Shi'ahs were not able to see

¹⁶ There is little doubt that the administration succeeded in its beneficial aims to the extent it was able to curb the authority of the local chieftains. For the condition of the people under the local chieftains, one has only to read the letters of 'Ālamgīr scattered in many collections to get the feeling that the central government invariably intervened on behalf of the common people. The traditions of tyranny practised by local chieftains go back into remote past, see Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, p. 206. As to the comparative merits of Hindu and Muslim governments, see Mill, II, p. 485, where it is observed: "With these considerations before the inquirer, it will not admit of any long dispute, that human nature in India gained, and gained very considerably, by passing from a Hindu to a Mohammedan government. Of this, without descending to particulars, the situation of human nature, under the Hindu governments which we have seen; that of the Mahrattas, for example; that of Nepal; that of Mysore, before the time of Hyder Ali; or that of Travancore; affords a very satisfactory proof".



that it was the power of Islam and not only that of orthodoxy which was at stake; the Hindus did not see that with the Empire would go peace and prosperity for several centuries. The Muslim masses were not able to grasp the situation for a long time. They had been used to the appointment of non-Muslims to positions of great responsibility; the Rājput relations of the royal family were styled as *mīrzās*—princes—and were treated as such. They had often seen non-Muslims fight against Muslim rebels on behalf of the emperor. Therefore, when the real power passed from the hands of the emperor into the hands of the Marathas and the British, who used the name of the emperor and pretended to exercise authority on his behalf, enjoying titles conferred by him, styling themselves the servants of the emperor and holding appointments to well-known duties from the monarch, it was for quite some time difficult for the masses to realize that the substance of authority had departed leaving behind only pretence and legal fictions.¹⁷ The Muslim masses were emotionally attached to the Empire, seeing in its glory a symbol of the power of their own community, but they had never been actively associated with power and, therefore, did not understand the change until it was too late. Even if they had understood the trends, they had no means of expressing their sentiments in an effective form.

It has been mentioned that the empire was suffering from serious strains as the result of the thoughtless policies pursued by Akbar. Even if these tensions had not been created or had not of themselves arisen in course of time, the empire could not have endured very much longer. The rise of the West because of its spirit of inquiry and adventure and its progress in technology with its consequent accession to power would have sooner or later overwhelmed the Mughul Empire, which would have succumbed to European imperialism. Even when they were at the height of their glory, the Mughuls were no match to the European powers at sea in spite of the distance which intervened between Europe and India.¹⁸ This is not the place

¹⁷ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 32, 33.

¹⁸ Matters had reached a state when Muslim pilgrims from the subcontinent could not go to Mecca by the sea route without Portuguese permits (Badā'ūnī, II, p. 203).



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to discuss the causes of the decay of the Muslim sea power, but it must be mentioned that the Mughuls never seem to have grasped its full importance and did nothing to retrieve the position. Without sea power they could not have long resisted the pressure of the West. And, if by some miracle, they had succeeded in keeping the West away, they could not have outlasted the impact of nationalism. It was not outside the realm of possibilities to deal with the Marathas, but Hindu nationalism could not have been resisted for long, especially when promptings from the West would have been persistent and continuous.

With wiser policies, however, the loss of power could have been staved off for quite a time. If the end had come gradually and in a different manner, it is not impossible that the Muslim community would have had time to make the necessary adjustments and it might not have entered a period of decline. Then its capacities might not have been undermined to such an extent that it emerged so weak and backward when it was confronted with new prospects of progress and independence. However, these are idle thoughts, because what has actually happened is the substance of history, not speculation about what could have happened in other circumstances.

Such speculation would be fruitless for another reason. The foremost cause of the loss of political power was a crisis in the Muslim character itself. The Muslim Empire had endured for so many centuries that it took some imagination to think that it could ever decline. The earlier Muslims had been exposed to so many dangers that they had to struggle for sheer existence. The little communities dispersed over a vast area had a vivid idea of the consequences if they failed in their vigilance. Revolutions and invasions of conquerors from the north-west kept this feeling alive. This produced a sense of responsibility as well as qualities of leadership and character which could take care of a situation in which the community was threatened with danger. The Mughul Empire succeeded in giving peace and prosperity, which had their rewards; but softness entered into the life of the average Muslim to an extent that he lost his grit of character. When big issues were lost from sight for such a length of time, the community lost its political sense



and became engrossed in petty matters, which bred a capacity for intrigue and selfishness but took away the qualities which alone could keep it politically alive. This is the reason why the nobles went on quarrelling among themselves, losing all the time the real source of power and wealth. Monarchs and courtiers alike succumbed to these corrosive tendencies. And finally, instead of an 'Ālamgīr I, it was a Muḥammad Shāh who sat upon the throne of Delhi, and the working of the administration under a wise administrator like Āṣaf Jāh Nizām-u'l-mulk was impeded by court jesters and buffoons. A community which had bred soldiers now bred dandies; gone were the days when princes had delighted in giving battle to wild tigers and enraged elephants; even the professional generals were carried in palanquins to the battle front. Much more deadly was the corruption that had entered the souls of the Muslims. The community was breeding too many parasites; religion had given place to superstition; communal and religious loyalties had succumbed to selfishness. It was not only an empire that fell; it was a community that fell from its moral pedestal and brought down with it all that had made it great and powerful.

The events following the death of 'Ālamgīr I tell a story of incompetence, short-sighted selfishness and treachery relieved only by the idealism of two persons, Nizām-u'l-mulk Āṣaf Jāh I,¹⁹ the founder of the state of Hyderabad, and the Rohillah Najīb-u'd-dawlah.²⁰ Three men, Dhu'l-fiqār Khān and the two Saiyid Brothers of Bārahah, share among themselves the prime responsibility for demolishing the edifice of the political power of the Muslims in the subcontinent.²¹ Nothing that they did was free from the taint of the basest motives of selfishness and treachery; their infamy was unrelieved by any extenuating circumstances. Instead of striving for the consolidation of the state and seeking the cooperation of the elements that could have rendered valuable service, they plunged the Empire into civil war and sought the help of those who were sworn enemies not only of Muslim power but also of the

¹⁹ For his biography see Khan, Yusuf Husain, *Nizam-u'l-mulk Asafjah I*.

²⁰ For Najīb-u'd-dawlah's biography see Fakhri.

²¹ For details see *History of the Freedom Movement, I*, Chapter III.



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public peace. Through their incompetence and lack of responsibility, the affairs of the central government were thrown into disorder; anarchy spread its tentacles far and wide, crushing a helpless population and plunging it into misery; tributary chiefs began to become independent and even the officers of the Empire thought more of founding their own dynasties, only to be engulfed later either by destruction or subjugation to a foreign power.

To speed the process came the invasion of Nādir Shāh of Iran. An excellent example of the perversion of all ideals is provided by the conduct of Sa'ādat Khān, the ancestor of the House of Oudh, who sabotaged the excellent terms obtained by Nizām-u'l-mulk from Nādir Shāh by exciting the conqueror's cupidity.²² Nizām-u'l-mulk was the only senior officer who had a sense of decency left; he was a competent administrator; twice he tried to bring some order into the affairs of the government; but the atmosphere at the court was not congenial for efficiency and he ultimately left Delhi in disgust and retired to the Deccan, where he succeeded in bringing order into the administration. Though chronologically he comes much later, the community threw up another competent fighter and administrator in the person of Tipū Sulṭān.²³ He had the foresight to see that the British were likely to wrest power from the rulers and chiefs of the subcontinent; he showed some understanding of the real causes of the growing power of the West and tried to introduce such reforms in his territories as could lay the foundations for its modernization, if he had been given time; he was the first potentate in the subcontinent to appreciate the value of international diplomacy; but it was not given to him to succeed, because the odds were too great against him.²⁴ He at least had the satisfaction of putting up his best endeavour and dying gallantly in defending his dominions. Among the ruling classes of the Muslims, men like Nizām-u'l-mulk and Tipū Sulṭān had become rare indeed; the community had lost the capacity of producing men of that calibre.

²² Ṭabāṭabā'ī, II, p. 484.

²³ Qureshi, "The Purpose of Tipu Sultan's Embassy to Constantinople", *Journal of Indian History*, 1945, pp. 74-78; also, *History of the Freedom Movement*, Chapter XV.

²⁴ *Ibid.*



When the sea ebbs after a tide, water is left standing in a few depressions; similarly when the Mughul Empire collapsed, a few centres of Muslim rule continued to exist for some time. The chief of these were the states of Bengal, Oudh, Mysore, and Hyderabad. Bengal was the first to fall;²⁵ Mysore disappeared as a Muslim state in 1799, when Tipū Sulṭān died fighting in the defence of his capital, Seringapatam.²⁶ Oudh was first reduced to vassalage and then annexed in 1856.²⁷ Hyderabad also became dependent upon the East India Company;²⁸ after the annexation of Oudh, Hyderabad became the chief patron of Islamic learning and culture. It has now disappeared from the map, having been absorbed into the neighbouring states of the Indian Union.

Interneccine quarrels among the Muslim nobles cost the Muslim community their political heritage. Consumed by the fire of the inordinate selfishness of those who should have shed their blood in its defence, the empire, a mighty growth, had been reduced to ashes; a few embers were left to sustain a little longer some suicidal selfishness or a desire for independence; and, then, as mostly happens to embers, they also were extinguished. The Maratha statesman had been right when he had said about his strategy against the Mughul Empire: "What is the use of lopping off the branches? Strike at the trunk; when it is cut off, the branches will fall of themselves."²⁹ The Muslim nobles had not understood this simple truth; they had themselves struck at the trunk in the hope that the branches would prosper better if they did not have to depend on the trunk for their sustenance. They paid heavily for this perverse logic, but, in the process, they destroyed a heritage that had been built up by the strenuous effort of many generations. Seldom has a people been betrayed so completely by its political leaders.

²⁵ Thompson and Garrat, pp. 90 ff.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 203 ff.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁹ Marshman, p. 100. The Maratha statesman was the Peshwa, Bājī Rāo.



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A Diagnosis of the Disease

Even the most superficial observer could see in the eighteenth century that the Muslim community had lost its grip on the subcontinent. The Maratha raids, wherever they occurred, demonstrated in a most painful manner to the average Muslim that his property, his life and even his honour were no longer safe.¹ Even around Delhi, the seat of Muslim power, the Sikh and Jāt depredations made life hazardous and unsafe.² The Jāts had rebelled under 'Ālamgīr I, but they had been suppressed. Chūrāman, a Jāt chief, started highway robbery in the reign of Farrukh Siyar; the imperial forces, however, succeeded in suppressing the Jāts once again.³ Then, with the characteristic short-sightedness of the Muslim nobility of this period, Šafdar Jang sought the help of the Jāts in his revolt against the Emperor Aḥmad Shāh and brought them into the suburbs of Delhi. The large Muslim population outside Shāh-jahānābād, in the area called Old Delhi in those days, suffered terribly. Rape, murder, arson and plunder were its fate;

¹ Tabātabā'i, II, p. 476; also, *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 170-172, 515, etc.; Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, pp. 49, 50.

² For details of Sikh depredations, Tabātabā'i, p. 402; Hairat, pp. 130, 131.

³ Khwāfi Khān, pp. 944, 945.

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many sought safety in suicide.⁴ The Sikhs swarmed into Sarhind and Sahāranpūr and inflicted the same hardships upon the Muslims of that area.⁵ These were challenges to the very existence of the community, yet its selfish elements did not desist from their activities. The common people felt bewildered. There seemed to be no hope, no future, and no remedy. The safety of the community had formerly been secured through a sturdy defence, which could be sustained only by drawing continuously upon a reservoir of moral stamina; it collapsed when the inner strength had been frittered away. The roofs and the walls of the edifice were falling, burying under the debris much of great value, but the fault lay in the foundations which had given way. Such a quick succession of heavy blows must have left the minds stunned and incapable of deep thought; the gloom must have been too thick for thoughtful and sensitive minds. However, such occasions do sometimes produce analytical thinkers who try to diagnose the disease which overtakes a people. The plight of this community produced Shāh Walī-u'llah.

He was born in 1703. His father was 'Abd-u'r-Raḥīm, a scholar and a Sufi of renown in his own right, who preferred to lead a life of retirement and, in spite of unrivalled opportunities for being associated with the government of such an orthodox monarch as 'Ālamgīr I, refrained from availing himself of them. He did, however, cooperate with the Emperor in the compilation of the well-known *Al-fatāwa-'l-'Ālamkīriyah*. He was the founder of a college, Madrasah-i-Raḥīmīyah, where he himself lectured. Since he was both a theologian and a Sufi, his effort was to remove the conflict between theology and mysticism.⁶ This spirit of compromise he bequeathed to his son, Shāh Walī-u'llah, who received his early education, both theological and mystical, under him. The son was a young man of promise; at a comparatively early age he not only graduated from his father's college, but also started lecturing

⁴ *Ṭabāṭabā'i*, III, p. 892; Shāh Walī-u'llah has mentioned "this terrible calamity" in several of his letters (*Nizāmī, Shāh Walī-u'llah ke siyāsī mak-tūbāt*, pp. 49, 89).

⁵ Latif, p. 180; also, *Khawāfī Khān*, II, pp. 651 ff.

⁶ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 493.



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here.⁷ After having been engaged in teaching for twelve years in that college, he left for Arabia to further his studies and to perform the pilgrimage. He studied at Medina for about fourteen months; here he was greatly influenced by Shaikh Abū Ṭāhir bin Ibrāhīm, who was a competent and careful scholar.⁸ He was capable of taking broad views of problems and tried to remove conflicts in differing views wherever this could be achieved. This confirmed Shāh Walī-u'llah in the attitude that he had inherited from his father. He returned to Delhi on 9 July 1732; then began the most fruitful period of his life.

It did not take him long to make his mark as an outstanding scholar. Even the effete Muḥammad Shāh recognized the worth of his work by giving Madrasah-i-Raḥīmīyah a new building within the city walls of the capital.⁹ The anxiety about the future of the Muslim community in the subcontinent had impressed itself so deeply upon Shāh Walī-u'llah's mind that, while at Medina, he was convinced through a mystic experience that it was his duty and destiny to save it.¹⁰ However, his keen intellect must soon have realized that he was confronted with a most complex problem. The decline of the empire was the result of the decay of the social order; this in turn was the result of the moral collapse of the society, which could not disentangle itself from selfish short-sightedness. Hence the basic need was a movement for moral regeneration. This would take time; the pressing need was to save it from immediate dangers. This consciousness must have been heightened by Nādir Shāh's sack of Delhi and the Maratha, Jāt and Sikh depredations. He felt that the first need was to restore the community's sense of unity, which had been shattered as the result of so many conflicts within its bosom.

These conflicts were of several kinds. The greatest and the most ruinous came from sectarian feelings, especially the

⁷ Walī-u'llah, *Al-juz'-u'l-lāṭif fī tarjumatī 'abd-i'-ḡ-ḡa'if*, gives the main events of his early life in brief outline.

⁸ Walī-u'llah, *Anfās-u'l-'ārifīn*, has a note, pp. 190-2; also, Walī-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-il'bālighah*, pp. 61, 62.

⁹ Aḥmad, Mawlawī Bashīr-u'd-dīn, II, p. 586.

¹⁰ Walī-u'llah, *Fuyūd-u'l-Haramain*, vision 44, pp. 297.



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hostility between the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs, which was crystallized in the internecine quarrels between the Tūrānī and Rohillah chiefs on one side and the Irānī nobles on the other. Religious differences, however, were not the only cause of loosening the bonds that had held the community together; there had crept into society economic and social factors that were working in the same direction. When the Muslim community was small and well-integrated, the brotherhood of Islam had to be a reality, otherwise there could be no enthusiasm for a common defence against external danger. There were differences in the standards of living among the various classes of society even then, but authority saw to it that the minimum was assured to everyone. In the remoter areas and settlements, the community feeling was strong enough to take care of the helpless and the poor. The large sums of money spent by official and private charity were intended to serve the same purpose. The mainstay of a community, however, can never be charity. The economic position of the Muslims was assured by the opportunities they had in the services of the state and in professions patronized by the government and the rich. The Muslim community also possessed a numerous class of craftsmen, traders and wholesale producers. Anarchy threw the economic organization built up in the course of the centuries into chaos and disorder; it bred parasites who fleeced the people and gave them nothing in return. A system of taxation is justified if it at least ensures security to the taxpayer, otherwise it becomes an engine of oppression. The political leaders had betrayed their trust; they were now incapable of rendering any service, and were merely parasites on the body politic.

To add to the malady, the discipline of organized government having disappeared, the nobles established their petty tyrannies over the areas that remained under their control. When conditions were so unsettled that it was impossible to predict what would happen the next day, the temptation to make hay while the sun shone was too great, and the exactions tended to become extortionate. In this process there was no discrimination between the Muslim and the non-Muslim. The Muslim peasant and craftsman suffered as much as his Hindu counterpart; but

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when the oppressor and the oppressed both happened to be Muslims, it broke the bonds of unity binding the Muslim community. The days were gone when small communities spread over a vast area arose as one man when challenged by an external danger; one no longer reads of organized resistance by Muslim settlements against the Jāts, the Sikhs and the Marathas. The Muslims had not only lost their leaders; they had lost their integration. From a well-integrated community, they had degenerated into a helpless crowd.

If this disastrous course of events was to be stopped, it could not be done without the creation of sound and devoted leadership at Delhi. Shāh Walī-u'llah thought of this city for two reasons: Delhi was still looked upon as the principal city of Muslim India and, it being the centre of his own activities, he could exercise his influence more directly there. He, therefore, tried to arouse the emperor from his lethargy, but he failed. Then he appealed to the nobility, who were incapable of listening to his sound advice.¹¹ Then in his despair he turned to Nizām-u'l-mulk Āṣaf Jāh, because he seemed to be the only one among the senior Mughul nobles who was imbued with the right ideals and had sufficient strength of character to rise above the surrounding corruption and short-sightedness, but this veteran administrator withdrew to the Deccan.¹² Shāh Walī-u'llah's pathetic appeal to him produced little effect, probably because, as an experienced statesman and administrator, he knew better than the scholarly philosopher that the court of Delhi was past reform and, therefore, he should try to save at least the Deccan.¹³

The only element in the politics of North India that could inspire some hope was the Rohillahs. They had entered the subcontinent in a fresh wave, having been uprooted by Nādir Shāh from their mountain homes.¹⁴ These brave hillsmen of the

¹¹ The appeals are in Walī-u'llah, *At-tafhīmāt-u'l-Ilāhīyah*, I, pp. 213ff. These appeals are of a general nature and are addressed to various sections of Muslim society. They have been summarized by Gilānī, pp. 93, 94; also, some are reproduced in Walī-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, pp. 114-116; also Nizāmī, *Shāh Walī-u'llah ke siyāsī maktubāt*, pp. 42-44.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹³ Nizām-u'l-mulk finally departed in 1740, *History of the Freedom Movement*, p. 255.

¹⁴ *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, II, p. 480.



north-western marches had for centuries found employment under the Muslim sovereigns of the subcontinent and had even wrested power from the Turks to establish their own empire; their migration to the hospitable plains had continued all this time, sometimes in a trickle, sometimes in large numbers. The Rohillaes were the latest wave; their good points were that they were brave fighters and had not lost their vigour and simple habits.¹⁵ They had not yet become tainted with the corruption of Delhi. They were staunch Muslims and class distinctions had still not corroded their society.¹⁶ They were not decadent, tried and spent. These qualities seemed to mark them out as the future leaders of Indian Islam. It is, therefore, not surprising that Shāh Walī-u'llah should have thought of using them for the resurgence of Muslim political power at Delhi.

The Rohillaes, however, had serious shortcomings which barred their way to leadership. They were not numerous enough to deal with such a formidable task and their resources were not adequate.¹⁷ They had brought with them traditions of too much independence, which prevented united action even in a crisis. They were extremely intolerant of sectarian differences; even minor deviations from their conception of orthodoxy were looked upon by them as heresy;¹⁸ this was a serious matter in an area where sectarian differences had played such havoc; it bred traditions of hostility with the new Shī'ah state of Oudh which ultimately resulted in the destruction of their

¹⁵ The word Rohillah comes from Roh, which was the name of the mountainous region now situated along the north-western frontier of Pakistan. Shāh Walī-u'llah was not the only thinker who was impressed with the good qualities of the Rohillaes; other minds as well turned in their direction (*History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 528, fn. 4).

¹⁶ They had brought their democratic habits from Roh; even important matters of war and peace were decided by open discussion in their *jirgas*, at this time assemblies of all men who attended; e.g. the discussions whether the Rohillaes should support the Mughul emperor Aḥmad Shāh or remain neutral in his struggle against Ṣafdar Jang, Fakhri, p. 7).

¹⁷ Despite their unquestioned bravery they were defeated because of the numerical superiority of their opponents; they occupied the ancient Katehr, now called Rohelkhand, which was too small an area to sustain large armies.

¹⁸ Gilānī, pp. 199-201.



political power.¹⁹ Shāh Walī-u'llah could not have been unaware of these deficiencies; the Rohillah sectarianism ran counter to his endeavour to bring about some understanding among the different sects; yet he had no choice. The Rohillahs were the only possibility in that situation and the deliverance of the Muslims from the tyranny of marauders could brook no delay. There was yet another reason why Shāh Walī-u'llah's mind turned towards the Rohillahs. It had now become obvious that it was futile to think of strengthening the Mughul Empire without some help from outside; Shāh Walī-u'llah had seen the consequences of securing aid from non-Muslims; the only Muslim power in a position to give some help was the new state founded by Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī in Afghanistan.²⁰ Shāh Walī-u'llah could hope for cooperation between Aḥmad Shāh and the Rohillahs. They had made a success of their administration and, by affording protection to their Hindu peasantry and traders, had brought prosperity to their territories;²¹ it was not beyond hope that they might mature and adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards the other sects of Islam. The Rohillah chief, through whom Shāh Walī-u'llah sought to implement his short-term mission of curbing the forces of anarchy, was Najib-u'd-dawlah.

Najib rose to power from humble beginnings. He came in 1743 to Rohelkhand, where the Rohillahs had settled down, and joined service as a foot soldier under a chief; but through his ability and efficiency, he made steady progress, until, by deciding to side with the Emperor Aḥmad Shāh²² in his efforts to suppress the rebellion of Šafdar Jang, he obtained the high manṣab of five thousand and the title of Najib-u'd-dawlah.²³ The *wazīr* of the next emperor, 'Ālamgir II,

¹⁹ Warren Hastings lent the British forces for the conquest of Rohelkhand by Oudh, thus deciding the issue of traditional enmity in favour of Oudh.

²⁰ For the history of the rise of the Abdālīs, see *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, chapter IX.

²¹ All writers and observers are agreed upon the excellence of the Rohillah administration, e.g., Sarkar, Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughul Empire*, I, p. 32.

²² The Mughul Emperor Aḥmad Shāh, not to be confused with Aḥmad Shāh Abadālī.

²³ For his biography see Fakhrī.



depended upon Maratha support, a policy with which Najib did not agree. He had already come under the influence of Shāh Wali-u'llah, for whom he had great respect and with whom he kept up an intimate correspondence and whose advice he invariably accepted.²⁴ Shāh Wali-u'llah's hope that Najib would prove to be a conscientious Muslim and make every effort to gain respite for the Muslims from the depredations to which they had been subjected by the Marathas, the Jāts and the Sikhs and would cooperate with Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī found justification in the actions of Najib, who has won praise from Muslim as well as non-Muslim historians for his statesmanship and far-sighted policies. Shāh Wali-u'llah also corresponded with Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī, to whom he related the sufferings of the Muslims and pointed out his duties as a Muslim monarch to strive to save them from the clutches of their tormentors.²⁵ Ultimately Najib-u'd-dawlah was able to organize an alliance of the Muslim powers of Northern India against the Marathas under the leadership of the capable Afghan monarch, which resulted in the great victory of Panipat in 1761 where the Marathas were crushed to an extent that they took long to recover their strength.²⁶ If the Muslims had shown any vigour and foresight, they might have solved the Maratha problem forever. The triumph of Muslim arms at Panipat was the culmination of Shāh Wali-u'llah's political efforts so far as his short-term programme was concerned, because he died in the following year. If Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī had not shown the consideration for the old Mughul dynasty which led to his abandonment of India, perhaps the history of the subcontinent might have taken a different course for some time. It is true that his resources were inadequate and the selfish and recalcitrant Muslim nobles of the subcontinent would perhaps not have given such support to him as would have made his rule effective. Perhaps these considerations were present in his mind when he withdrew from India. However, he was in no more difficult a position than Bābur had been

²⁴ Nizāmī, *Shāh Wali-u'llah ke siyāsī maktūbāt*, pp. 61-67.

²⁵ Nizāmī, pp. 45-53.

²⁶ For the details of the Battle see *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 288 ff. For its effects upon the Marathas, see Sarkar, Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughul Empire*, pp. 253 ff.



when he established himself in the subcontinent. There was a fair chance of his success if he had tried, because he had earned great prestige by his victory and he possessed sufficient vigour of character to save some portions of the old empire. All hope was lost after his withdrawal and the Mughul court sank deeper and deeper into the mire of its sloth and inefficiency. Shāh Walī-u'llah's political effort succeeded in winning only a short-lived respite for the Muslims from the rapacity of the anarchic elements.

It is, however, in thinking of the basic causes of the decline of the Muslims and trying to find remedies for these evils that the real greatness of Shāh Walī-u'llah lies. It is his thought which has found for him an enduring niche in the history of Islam. Some of the factors working for the downfall of the Muslim community have been mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. Shāh Walī-u'llah thought that the fundamental cause of the moral decline of the Muslims of the subcontinent was their ignorance of Islam itself. The basic teachings of Islam are contained in the Qur'ān, the authority of which has been recognized by all Muslims. An emphasis upon the teachings of the Qur'ān would, therefore, tend to reduce sectarian differences and create feelings of solidarity, because the differences are mostly a matter of interpretation. Hence, it was necessary to popularize the Qur'ān itself. Not many knew Arabic sufficiently well to understand the Qur'ān; the average Muslim derived his knowledge of Islam from the teachings of the jurists, theologians and Sufis. However valuable these might be, they could not replace direct knowledge of the Qur'ān itself. Shāh Walī-u'llah, therefore, translated it into Persian, a language which was then widely understood by the educated classes and even today has such a strong affinity with Urdu. This was a bold step, because before this no handy translation had existed in Persian; a previous work by a learned theologian contained the translation of the various verses interspersed and incorporated into a commentary.²⁷

²⁷ Mawlānā Shihāb-u'd-dīn of Daulatabad wrote his *Baḥr-i-mawwāj*, commentary on the Qur'ān in which the Persian translation of the verses was included. The language used has been criticized as being florid and tending to obscure rather than explain the meaning, ('Abd-u'l-Ḥaqq, p. 175).



Shāh Walī-u'llah produced a translation and introduced the fashion of interlinear composition of the Arabic text and the translation. As Muslims did read the Qur'ān in Arabic, even though they did not understand the meaning, such an arrangement would gradually give the constant reader some understanding of the Arabic text as well. If it is remembered that some Muslim peoples resisted the translation of the Qur'ān into any language right up to the twentieth century,²⁸ it would become clear that Shāh Walī-u'llah had taken a revolutionary step; it is, therefore, not surprising that it was opposed in some circles at that time,²⁹ but so great was his reputation that the translation succeeded and was later followed by translations into Urdu.³⁰ The Muslims of the subcontinent have been foremost in the field of translating the Qur'ān and have several renderings in different languages to their credit. The results of the translation of the Qur'ān have been far-reaching and today the majority of the educated Muslims are aware of the contents of the book. In another work Shāh Walī-u'llah formulated the principles of the interpretation of the Qur'ān.³¹

Shāh Walī-u'llah was very anxious that the minor differences among the Muslims should come to be seen in their proper perspective. He, therefore, took these up one by one and tried to bring about some understanding of the different points of view. The orthodox Sunni community follows four schools of interpretations, all considered to be authentic; yet there grew up intolerance of interpretations that belonged to a different school. Shāh Walī-u'llah sought to soften these differences by explaining the function of interpretation.³²

²⁸ Under the Ottomans the Turkish theologians were generally opposed to the translation of the Qur'ān; the *shāikhs* of Al-azhar held it sinful to translate the Qur'ān as late as 1928 (see Fremantle, pp. 408-419).

²⁹ Ikram, *Rūd-i-Kawthar*, p. 346.

³⁰ His son Shāh 'Abd-u'l-Qādir translated the Qur'ān into Urdu; since then there have been several translations. Shāh Walī-u'llah gave his translation the name of *Fatḥ-u'r-Raḥmān*.

³¹ In his work *Al-fawz-u'l-kabīr fī uṣul-i't-tafsīr*.

³² In his work *'Iqd-u'l-jīd fī aḥkām-i'l-ijtihād wa't-taqlīd*, a translation of selected passages was published by Daud Rahbar under the caption "Shāh Walī-u'llah and Ijtihād" in *The Muslim World*, XLV, 4 (October 1955).



In fact in Islamic parlance interpretation is called *ijtihād*, which has a wider connotation, because, in the words of Shāh Walī-u'llah, it is "an exhaustive endeavour to understand the basic principles" of the holy law and is not confined to an effort to understand the conclusions of the earlier scholars. Hence it may result in disagreement with the rulings of the earlier jurists and theologians, however eminent they may be. A person who has the necessary qualifications and competence can probe into the law and theology and it is a mistake to argue that such men do not exist now. He then discussed the causes that lead to differences in *ijtihād* and reached the conclusion that often the truth lies between two extreme views; hence it is ridiculous to be stubborn and to deny whatever the opponent has to say, because there is room in Islam for such differences.

When the earlier theologians had recognized four schools of thought as being equally orthodox, they had conceded tacitly that there was room for differences of opinion in the interpretation of the sacred texts; considerable rigidity, however, had crept into the thought of later scholars, because they were afraid that the recognition of too many differences would breed anarchy of thought and encourage the rise of heresies; the prevailing opinion among the orthodox was that the later-day *ijtihād* should not go further than the four walls of the recognized schools; besides, the followers of one school should normally not borrow the rulings of another, unless they were forced by necessity. This was the doctrine of *ijtihād-i-muqaiyyad*, or limited scope of interpretation.³³ This attitude had sought safety in imposing limitations which tended to make the demarcation between the four schools too rigid, besides imposing restrictions on the human intellect in understanding the truth of religion.

Shāh Walī-u'llah tried to remedy this without paving the way for licence in religious thinking by emphasizing that the doors of *ijtihād* had not been closed and pointing out that it needed both erudition and caution.³⁴ As progress does not imply

³³ *Al-inṣāf fī bayān-i-sabab-i'l-ikhtilāf*, pp. 124 ff. This kind of *ijtihād* is also called *ijtihād fī'l-maḍhhab*.

³⁴ Walī-u'llah, *Izālat-u'l-khifā 'an khilāfat-i'l-khulāfā*, p. 4; also, Walī-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, I, p. 350.



throwing overboard the work of previous generations of scholars, he recommended an attitude of respect for unanimity achieved by the thinkers of the past.³⁵ This was in keeping with the general trend in *Shāh Walī-u'llah's* thought which was progressive without being destructively radical. This attitude was also calculated to prevent the development of fresh differences through the introduction of new interpretations out of harmony with previous thinking.³⁶ He also laid down the principle that for those who were not qualified for *ijtihād* it was incumbent to follow the rulings of competent *mujtahids*.³⁷

Shāh Walī-u'llah tried to bring about conciliation in another field as well. The doctrine of monism had been the subject of controversy among the Sufis since the days of the *Mujaddid-i-alf-i-thānī*. *Shāh Walī-u'llah* wrote a small pamphlet on the topic in which he considerably reconciled the two views, saying that the difference is mainly of semantics. He confirmed the *Mujaddid's* contention that the realization that monism is but an experience is a higher stage in the knowledge of reality.³⁸ The difference between his point of view and that of the *Mujaddid* is that he does not condemn monism so severely and recognizes the value of cultivating that experience as a part of mystic discipline.³⁹ He fully upholds the contention of the *Mujaddid* and of other orthodox Sufis that any mystic experience which does not conform to the dictates of the *Qur'ān* and the *sunnah* must be rejected.⁴⁰ In this way he tried to remove the conflict which had grown among the Sufis without encouraging the heresies which had tended to seek shelter in Sufism through its doctrine of monism. This could have helped the Sufis to devote themselves again to the work of spiritual regeneration without dissipating their time in doctrinal controversy.

The worst fissure in the body of Indian Islam at this time

³⁵ *The Muslim World*, XLV (1955), pp. 347, 358.

³⁶ *Ibid*; also, *Walī-u'llah, Ḥujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, pp. 706-708.

³⁷ *Walī-ullah, 'Al-inṣāf fī bayān-i'l-sabab-i-ikhtilāf*, pp. 70, 71; also, *Walī-u'llah, Ḥujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, I, pp. 704, 705.

³⁸ *Walī-u'llah, Faiṣalatu waḥdat-i'l-wujūd wa'sh-shuhūd*, p. 6.

³⁹ *Ibid*. He however deplores that it is not put to good use; also, *Walī-u'llah, Fuyūḍ-u'l-Ḥaramain*, vision 1.

⁴⁰ *Walī-u'llah, Waṣiyat-nāmah*, p. 3.



had been caused by the hostility between the Shi'ahs and the Sunnis; it was in the effort to smooth over these differences that the real greatness of Shāh Wali-u'llah in the field of conciliation of differing points of view is demonstrated. He wrote a work on the caliphate in which he discussed the whole question in a conciliatory manner and tried to remove the misconceptions of the Shi'ahs about the personalities of the first three caliphs.⁴¹ There were many Sunnis in those days who believed that the Shi'ahs were not Muslims at all; he boldly stood up against such opinions and laid it down that the Shi'ahs were not outside the pale of Islam.⁴² This tradition of tolerance was so well established by him that his son, Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Aziz, was accused of Shi'ah leanings by some extremists for following in his footsteps.⁴³ There can be little doubt that Shāh Wali-u'llah succeeded through his writings in laying the foundations of understanding and tolerance among the various sects of Islam in the subcontinent, which in spite of occasional setbacks has since maintained traditions of sectarian tolerance.

The establishment of good relations between the different sects of Islam was the remedy for only one symptom; there had grown up differences because of economic and political maladjustments as well.⁴⁴ Shāh Wali-u'llah made a deep study of these maladies and reached the conclusion that society was suffering from a lack of equilibrium; the imbalance between the functions and the performance of the different organs had brought about such a deterioration in its working that there was little relationship left between production and consumption. The groups which should have been the custodians of its well-being had become parasites; instead of rendering any service in return for what they consumed, they had reduced themselves to the state of mere idlers or rapacious

⁴¹ In his work *Izālat-ul-u'l-Khifā 'an Khilāfat-i'l-khulafā*.

⁴² Wali-u'llah, *Al-'aqīdat-u'l-ḥasanah*, p. 2.

⁴³ *Gilānī*, p. 202.

⁴⁴ vide *supra* f.n. 11.



exploiters.⁴⁵ He castigated everyone who was a burden either upon the public funds or upon the public economy.⁴⁶ He rightly laid great emphasis upon the economic well-being of the peasantry and the craftsmen, because this was the basis of a sound economy in those days;⁴⁷ at the same time he did not want them to be impervious to moral considerations.⁴⁸ To be good members of society, they also had to cultivate habits of hard work, honesty, and efficiency.⁴⁹ He considered it of the greatest importance that everyone should do productive work to earn his livelihood. He laid the utmost emphasis upon the principles of '*adl* and *tawāzun*, justice and equilibrium, without which society cannot endure.

The principle of '*adl*, he explains, is the very life of all political and social organization; freedom, government and good life all depend upon it.⁵⁰ The maintenance of *tawāzun* or equilibrium is, according to him, mainly dependent upon healthy economic conditions. The health of an economy can be secured only by a proper distribution of wealth; an unequal distribution which leads to its concentration in the hands of a few and reduces others to extreme poverty creates a serious disequilibrium and produces conflicts within the society which affect its well-being adversely; it sometimes leads nations to aggression for the sake of acquiring by force what others have earned through their thrift and industry.⁵¹ Shāh Walī-u'llah laid great emphasis upon the necessity of removing all forms of economic injustice and tyranny, because when a group is reduced to a level where it must work like animals to earn a livelihood, it loses its social virtues.⁵² Similarly when some people give themselves up to the accumulation of means of pleasure and enjoyment and become addicted to extravagance, they injure the economic well-being of

⁴⁵ Walī-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, 1, p. 285.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Walī-u'llah, *At-tafhimāt-u'l-Ilāhiyah*, 1, p. 217.

⁴⁹ Walī-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, I, p. 308.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 328, II, p. 409.

⁵¹ Muhsini, p. 130; Walī-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, I, pp. 520-521.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 355, 525.



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society.⁵³ Productive work which is devoted to the satisfaction of the valid needs of society is the basis of economic health, without which the maintenance and cultivation of social virtues is impossible, because until the mind is free from economic worries, it cannot devote itself to higher pursuits.⁵⁴

It is obvious that Shāh Walī-u'llah believed that spiritual progress was not attainable by a society that was starved for the essential needs of life or that was suffering from a lack of economic equilibrium; his conception of a religion could not be characterized as an opiate for the people. Shāh Walī-u'llah was of the opinion that social organization is not static in its nature; it tends to assume complexity as society progresses.⁵⁵ The basic cause of this tendency is that with the coming together of human beings the pattern of their economic activity becomes more intricate and, therefore, in view of new needs and activities, groups tend to federate or even coalesce and thus increase both the scope and the function of social organization.⁵⁶ This tendency to seek identification with increasingly larger groups also arises from the fact that the larger the unit, the greater is the protection it can give; even the establishment of a good polity by a small group does not secure for it freedom from the danger of aggression on the part of other groups, hence the search continues for a power to protect the weaker from the aggression of the stronger. The highest achievement of social progress, according to Shāh Walī-u'llah, is the establishment of a society where such aggression becomes impossible and the conflict among polities is eliminated.⁵⁷ He does not advocate the idea of a world government in so many words, but it is the natural corollary of his line of thought.

The end of social organization, according to Shāh Walī-u'llah, is moral; therefore, it fails in its purpose if the various elements in a society do not observe the moral code.⁵⁸ Individual morals

⁵³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 308.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 286 ff, 322, 525.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 260 ff.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 269 ff.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 264, 298, 299.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 308, 309.



have a direct bearing upon the health of the society, because social virtues are a reflection of the morals of the individuals forming a society.⁵⁹ There is no moral vice that does not affect the life of the society. A society becomes diseased if its moral code becomes defective, or if its equilibrium is disturbed, or anti-social elements injure its effective organization.⁶⁰ The first is a serious matter because unless the society recognizes that the laws that it follows are defective, such a society has no means of reform. The equilibrium of a society is often disturbed by wrong economic practices or maladjustments arising from greed, injustice, idleness and other vices. To the extent that crime flourishes in a society, it is unhealthy, and if anti-social elements succeed in getting a complete stranglehold the society will be destroyed.⁶¹

Shāh Wali-u'llah has laid it down that society comes into being and progresses into higher forms because of certain natural urges in humanity;⁶² similar urges lead even animals to form groups;⁶³ but if a society is so diseased that it fails to fulfil this urge, then it has no basis left for existence. It follows that Shāh Wali-u'llah did not believe in any theory of social contract. If societies are formed for the fulfilment of natural urges, they begin to disintegrate naturally when those urges are frustrated. In illustrating his theories, he draws copiously from world history, and especially from the annals of the Persians and the Romans.⁶⁴ This implies that Muslim societies were no exception so far as subjection to the laws of growth and decay was concerned; but they were in an advantageous position because they possessed a code that was based upon revelation and was, therefore, fundamentally free from error. However, through human perversity or ignorance, Muslim societies could also stray away from the basic laws of social existence and thus import the diseases which ultimately spell death. It also follows that he believed that Islam embodies

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 285, 286.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 519, 520.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 437, 438.

⁶² *Ibid.*, I, p. 305.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 260.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 524, 525, 526.



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within its teachings those natural principles that sustain beneficial social organization and work for its progress.⁶⁵

Shāh Wali-u'llah, therefore, contends that the ordinances of Islam are not based upon the arbitrary will of God; He has revealed what is beneficial for humanity.⁶⁶ God is not a tyrant revelling in getting Himself obeyed for the satisfaction of exacting obedience;⁶⁷ such a conception is unworthy and erroneous; in His great mercy He has shown the way which leads to mundane and spiritual well-being and progress. Shāh Wali-u'llah did not content himself with the enunciation of this principle; he went into great detail and showed the beneficial nature of the obligations laid down by Islam.⁶⁸ This was not intended merely as an exercise in scholastic philosophy; if the Muslim community in the subcontinent was to be rescued from the moral decay that had overtaken it, no progress could be made without delivering it from the schizophrenia of believing in a law but discarding it in practice. It had to be demonstrated to the Muslims that mere belief could not produce the results that Islam desired its followers to obtain and that there was a direct relationship between the morals of the individuals and of the society and their condition. A religion can be mere escapsism when it is thought that the right belief and a strong faith in the love of God Who will forgive us all our trespasses is all that is needed to be a believer. Shāh Wali-u'llah did believe in the love and mercy of God; he was a Sufi himself and the attainment of mystic union with God was his aim; he had his mystic exaltation;⁶⁹ but he wanted the Muslims to realize that their religion laid great emphasis upon those virtues as well that would enable them to lead a well-ordered and beneficial social life, because man could not find his fullest fulfilment without belonging to a healthy and well-integrated society.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 526.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 128.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 133.

⁶⁸ His voluminous work, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah* is devoted, entirely to this purpose; his other works also follow the same technique and purpose.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 130. In greater detail *Fuyūḍ-u'l-Haramain* is devoted to the narration of his visions. There are numerous references in other works as well.



As human society must have a moral basis for a healthy existence, therefore, insistence upon the moral values of Islam and their explanation was considered necessary by Shāh Walī-u'llah. Knowledge, however, does not always give such fervour as translates belief into action. This was the reason why Shāh Walī-u'llah continued the tradition of combining theological education with mystic training. This was not an innovation; it had long been the fashion for theologians to have some mystic training also; besides, all orthodox mystics required their leading disciples to acquire a knowledge of theology as well, so that their emotional attitudes might be kept within the bounds of Islamic beliefs. Shāh Walī-u'llah realized the value of this combination; his family and disciples kept up this practice. They valued the emotional fervour which made the practice of the moral and spiritual code of Islam a pleasure instead of an encumbrance; besides they believed in the validity of the mystic experience. Shāh Walī-u'llah felt inspired by his mystic experiences to make his Herculean efforts for the rejuvenation of Muslim society in the subcontinent; without the confidence born of such experience he would perhaps have felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. He, however, was not unaware of the dangers inherent in unbalanced mysticism; he warned the community against following spurious mystics and those who had lost their balance.⁷⁰

A good deal of matter, in reality extraneous to Islam, had crept into Muslim theology through faulty interpretation of the Qur'ān; another channel had been the search for details of events referred to briefly in the Qur'ān; for this purpose some of the interpreters had accepted stories from Jewish and other mythology. Besides, there had been a similar search for the circumstances in which particular verses of the Qur'ān had been revealed.⁷¹ This tendency had brought in its wake two main evils. The universal and eternal nature of the teachings of the Qur'ān was compromised; because if a teaching is tied down to certain happenings, its application tends to be limited; and then the desire to find the details had sometimes encouraged

⁷⁰ Walī-u'llah, *Waṣīyat-nāmāh*, p. 3.

⁷¹ Technically called *shāh-i-nuzūl*, circumstances of revelation.



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the growth of unhistorical legends and traditions, such as have found a place in the statements of weak and unreliable narrators like Wāqidī. Shāh Wali-u'llah was not unaware of the need to study a teaching with reference to its historical background, but he advocated moderation in the adoption of this method and criticized those who tended to ignore the basic fact that the Qur'ān was intended to be a repository of eternal values and universal guidance.⁷² In the matter of ḥadīth, of which Shāh Wali-u'llah was a competent scholar, his tendency was to rely more upon the earlier collections and traditions, because it was comparatively easier to establish their authenticity.⁷³

Shāh Wali-u'llah was of the opinion that too much rigidity and strictness defeat their purpose; if religion was not to be discarded as impracticable and its ideals forsaken as impossible of achievement, it was necessary to interpret its injunctions with leniency; he, therefore, castigated those theologians who discarded the more lenient interpretation in favour of the more difficult.⁷⁴ This attitude was in keeping with his general preference for moderation and compromise. Indeed most of his views were the result of his constant endeavour to shun extremism of every kind and bring about compromise in place of conflict; he did enunciate principles with which "all but extremists" would be inclined to agree.⁷⁵

He had in his programme some urgent reforms like his short-term political measures which could not wait for the realization of the fuller change in the attitudes of the Muslim community; these consisted mainly of ridding the community of such un-Islamic social practices as had crept into its pores through contacts with the native society and its beliefs.⁷⁶ In his opinion, the health of the Muslim society demanded that the doctrines and values inculcated by Islam should be maintained in their pristine purity unsullied by extraneous influences.

⁷² Wali-u'llah, *Al-fawz-u'l-kabīr fī uṣūl-i't-tafsīr*.

⁷³ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 502, 503; also, Wali-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, I, pp. 622, 623.

⁷⁴ Wali-u'llah, *'Iqd-u'l-jīd fī aḥkām-i'l-ijtihād wa't-taqlīd*, p. 93.

⁷⁵ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 511.

⁷⁶ Wali-u'llah, *Al-balāgh-u'l-mubīn* (Urdu translation), p. 14.



He was so particular in this respect that he did not like the adoption even of any superficial customs. He was anxious to maintain the separate entity of the community, therefore, he was averse even to the adoption of local fashions in dress.⁷⁷ He did not want the Muslims to become a part of the general milieu of the subcontinent; he wanted them to keep alive their relations with the rest of the Muslim world so that the springs of their inspiration and ideals might ever remain located in Islam and the traditions of the world community developed by it.⁷⁸

Like other Muslim thinkers Shāh Walī-u'llah believed in the all-embracing nature of Islam. He did not draw a line between the principles of sociology, politics and economics on the one hand and the moral teachings of Islam on the other. He did not think it possible that without the moral background of Islam, sociology, economics and politics could achieve the highest purpose of human existence. In his view a good and beneficial society was impossible to achieve without insistence upon the moral and spiritual values of Islam; it was also equally difficult to practise Islam in its entirety and to develop to the fullest extent the possibilities inherent in it without the support of a healthy society. It is for this purpose that he lays down the principle that anti-social activities and disregard for civic responsibilities incur the displeasure of God;⁷⁹ it was for the same reason that he did not think it possible to restore political vigour in the community without first curing it of un-Islamic practices and aberrations from the true path. Shāh Walī-u'llah considered political authority indispensable for the health of a community; he could not shut his eyes to the disasters that confronted his people after the decline of their political power. Hence he advocated short-term reforms in the administration with the same assiduity as he preached the discarding of customs and beliefs extraneous to Islam; he examined the ills of society with the same care as the flaws in the interpretations of theologians; the lack of moderation in the acceptance of the rulings and opinions of the leading jurists was to

⁷⁷ Walī-u'llah, *Al-balāgh-u'l-mubīn*, (original), p. 1.

⁷⁸ Walī-u'llah, *Waṣīyat-nāmāh*, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Walī-u'llah, *Hujjat-u'llah-i'l-bālighah*, I, chapter XI, pp. 519-28, especially p. 528.



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him as serious a matter as the imbalance caused in the economy of a society by too many people crowding to a few professions to the detriment of others.⁸⁰

This view of religion and society imposes too heavy a responsibility upon him who thinks of diagnosing the causes of the decay of his people; it needs an almost encyclopaedic knowledge; it demands application capable of producing a library of works on diverse subjects. Shāh Wali-u'llah did not flinch from so colossal an undertaking and performed it with rare success. It is true that he did not succeed in stemming the tide of political decline; but he aroused those urges in the community which gradually enabled it to win back some of its moral fervour and to maintain the purity of its doctrine. The rescue of the community's conscience, its beliefs, and its faith in its moral purpose from the debris of the eighteenth century was no mean achievement in itself. Shāh Wali-u'llah, however, achieved even more; through his works he made lasting contributions to so many fields of Muslim thought.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 270, 271.



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Reformers and Warriors

Shāh Wali-u'llah was too balanced a thinker to hope that the Muslim community could be restored to health within his lifetime. It was necessary to provide for the continuity of his programme of work for the moral and political regeneration of the Muslims of the subcontinent after his death; besides, the work was too stupendous for him to undertake it single-handed. He, therefore, trained a band of scholars who were conversant with his views and were inspired with the same ideals. Even a resounding victory like the Muslim triumph at Panipat could not bolster the crumbling throne of the Mughuls; it would have been foolish to build any hopes on such weak foundations. Besides, the political pattern had changed with the emergence of the British as the strongest power in the subcontinent. Four years after the Battle of Panipat, the British had wrested from the Mughul Empire the *diwān*i of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa;¹ thirty-eight years after this "grant", in 1803, the Mughul emperor was glad to become a pensioner of the British.² No amount of legal quibbling could hide the fact that the British were the paramount power in

¹ Thornton, I, p. 496. The circumstances in which the *diwān*i was transferred are discussed in detail; also, see Marshman, pp. 161, 162, who quotes the feelings expressed in this connection by a Muslim historian.

² Thornton, III, pp. 324-326.

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the subcontinent, and there was no state or prince left who could challenge their supremacy. The Muslim Empire had fallen without any hope of revival. No Muslim state within the subcontinent was better than a vassal of the new European power which had replaced the rule of the Mughuls. There were still a few who hoped to gain the support of the Afghan kingdown without a full understanding of its real position.³ Shāh Wali-u'llah's trained workers were not to be deceived by such hopes. They were convinced that only the Muslim people could retrieve the lost position to the extent that it could be retrieved. The people, however, were decadent, demoralized, bewildered, and disorganized. Could they be revived through their faith, which they understood only imperfectly, and a philosophy of social integration based upon that faith?

Shāh Wali-u'llah's followers, like their preceptor, had no doubt that such a revival was not only possible but also necessary. They had also a sense of urgency because every day that passed made the Muslims more subservient and helpless. They widened their contacts with the people. This took several forms. They did not discard the ancient method of mystic training to create the emotional urge for righteousness and Islam; but it was obvious that such training was not suited to all temperaments; hence they organized mass meetings for preaching the teachings of Islam in the light of Shāh Wali-u'llah's interpretation; and they undertook to rewrite the teachings of Shāh Wali-u'llah in less technical and more popular language. Shāh Wali-u'llah's sons took a prominent part in this work. Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Aziz was born in 1746 and was thus sixteen years old at the time of his father's death.⁴ Some of the most capable disciples of Shāh Wali-u'llah gave their utmost attention to Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Aziz's education and soon after he became the leader of the movement started by his father. He died in 1823; throughout his life he was busy in propagating the ideals and thought of his father. He wrote several books which were based upon Shāh Wali-u'llah's ideas but were written in a language more easily intelligible

² Busawan Lal, pp. 283, 284. Amīr Khān and his officers seemed certain that they could interest the Afghan monarch or at least the tribes to help Amīr Khān in continuing his warlike activities.

⁴ Ikrām, *Rūd-i-Kawthar*, p. 389.



to a man of average education.⁵ Twice a week he would preach to large gatherings and he was so regular that even illness did not prevent him from attending to this urgent work.⁶ He was ably assisted by his brothers: Shāh 'Abd-u'l-Qādir who rendered the Qur'ān into idiomatic Urdu so that the people who were not conversant with Persian could read its meaning in that language, and Shāh Rafi'-u'd-dīn who produced a literal rendering in the same language. For sixty years Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz laboured at his mission.

He could not concentrate upon educational and religious work to the exclusion of political matters which were causing grave anxiety to all thinking Muslims. The Muslim power was gone, but the Muslims were still confused because the legal fiction of the Mughul emperor's sovereignty was kept up.⁷ Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz removed this confusion by declaring unambiguously that the emperor was utterly helpless; the real power was in the hands of the British; they had only found it politic to refrain from establishing their administration in certain areas. The subcontinent was no longer *dār-u'l-Islām*, a land where the Faith could consider itself in power or even free; the fact that the British did not interdict the practice of certain Islamic rites made no difference; the Muslims were now living in *dār-u'l-ḥarb*, an area where Islam had been deprived of its authority.⁸ The implication of this ruling was that in such regions it is the duty of the Faithful to strive for the restoration of Muslim authority. In another ruling he laid it down that it was lawful to learn English, or for that matter any language or branch of knowledge, provided that the intention was to put it to a beneficent and lawful use; but if it was intended to use the knowledge to ingratiate oneself with the British or to seek employment of a humiliating or unlawful nature, then its acquisition was not permissible. Employment under the British was lawful, if the duties

⁵ Sindhī, pp. 58, 67 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁷ Marshman, p. 268, says about the helpless Shāh 'Ālam: "The emperor, though a prisoner and sightless, was still considered the fountain of honour by Hindoos and Mahomedans, and a patent of nobility under the imperial seal was as highly prized in the remotest provinces of the Deccan as it had been in the days of Aurungzebe".

⁸ 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz, I, pp. 16-17.



assigned were beneficial to society like the suppression of thieves and robbers or the explanation and enforcement of the Islamic law, but it was forbidden if one was required to observe a humiliating etiquette which compromised the dignity of the believer or to cooperate with the British in unlawful activities.⁹ It was a mortal sin amounting almost to apostasy to cooperate with the British in the destruction of Muslim lives or the subversion of the Muslim authority and the propagation of false beliefs and un-Islamic practices.¹⁰

Mere rulings could not serve the purpose and something more active had to be undertaken; but such an activity could be based only upon popular support. The Muslim princes were too subservient to the British to be of any great use. If the movement was to be popular, it had to be organized and planned with great circumspection and placed under the leadership of trustworthy and capable leaders. The ground had to be prepared carefully, support had to be canvassed, a network of centres for raising funds and volunteers had to be established, feasible objectives had to be defined, and when this had been achieved, the movement was to be publicly launched. When it is taken into consideration that communications were slow, the distances long, and the means of publicity extremely restricted, the media of mass contacts available today being in those days mostly non-existent, the amount of work involved in such a project is seen to be stupendous. Yet slowly and patiently, Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz and his associates overcame these difficulties. Their tact and methods deserve praise for circumspection because they gave no excuse to the British to interfere. If the movement was to take the shape of an armed conflict, a military leader had to be found or trained for this purpose. He had to be a man of spiritual attainments, honest, sincere, brave and devoted passionately to Islam and the cause. The remnants of the degenerate Muslim nobility could not provide such a man; he had to come from a class still immune to the common social maladies of the environment.

There was a family of Ḥasani Saiyids which had settled down at Rae Bareilly about forty-nine miles from Lucknow.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 186.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 186.



They were related to Shāh Walī-u'llah's family. A scion of this family, Saiyid Aḥmad, was destined to play an important role in history.¹¹ He was born in 1786. As a child he did not make much progress in his studies; he was still young when his father died and he went to Lucknow in search of employment. He did not succeed in his quest; this perhaps impressed upon him the need of a better education and he decided to go to Delhi and enroll himself as a pupil of Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz. He stayed at Delhi for two years; it became fairly obvious then that he was not destined to be a scholar, but he did make some progress and learnt the elements of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth and acquired a fair knowledge of Persian. He was also given some mystic training from which he benefited more satisfactorily.

Ever since his childhood he had displayed excellent qualities of character and piety. From Delhi he went back to Rae Bareli. After a short stay he went to Rajputana to join the service of the Pindari leader, Amīr Khān. He was enrolled as a trooper; later he was assigned the duty of leading the troops in prayers; even then the adventurous life of the camp and the constant fighting could not have left him untouched. Indeed since his very childhood he had shown an inclination for manly sports including horsemanship and the use of arms which were part of the normal training of a Muslim gentleman in that age. It was in Amīr Khān's camp that he acquired proficiency in the art of war as known to the progressive commanders of the subcontinent. They had adopted several features of the European technique including the proper use of artillery. Familiarity with these methods was to prove useful to him later.

When Amīr Khān settled down as the feudatory ruler of Tonk, there was little left that the Saiyid could do in his service. He then returned to Delhi in 1817. He had matured a good deal; he had acquired invaluable military experience; his progress as a mystic had been remarkable. Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz asked his nephew, Shāh Ismā'il, and his son-in-law, Mawlānā 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaiy, to accept Saiyid Aḥmad as their

¹¹ There are several early and later works on his life and work, e.g., by Thānesarī (*Tārīkh-i-'Ajibah*), Nadwī, Saiyid Abū-'l-Ḥasan; the most recent and extensive is by Mihr, *Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid*.



spiritual guide.¹² This throws some light upon the relations between the house and school of Shāh Walī-u'llah and Saiyid Aḥmad, which have been obscured a little because of the legends which have naturally grown around the personality of the latter. It seems legitimate to draw from these happenings the conclusion that Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz had played an important role in preparing the Saiyid for the leadership of the new movement. There are strong reasons to believe that Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz had given considerable thought to the question of a *jihād* and had evolved some plan in his mind.¹³ It was natural that like many others his mind should have turned towards Afghanistan and the Pathan tribes; this alone would offer a rational explanation of his dream that emphasized the need for learning Pushtu.¹⁴ He perhaps first planted the idea in Saiyid Aḥmad's mind that it might be useful to join Amīr Khān's camp. The idea then achieved the intensity of a mystic experience.

In any case Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz seems to have been privy to the reasons which had prompted Saiyid Aḥmad to seek employment with Amīr Khān, because, before leaving him, the Saiyid informed Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz of his intention, saying that there was no excuse for his remaining there. Then the Saiyid went straight to Delhi, where he was received with great cordiality which would not have been extended to an ordinary disciple. Shāh Walī-u'llah's school had many followers throughout the subcontinent. A network of small centres had grown up throughout Rohelkhand, the Doab, Oudh and Bihar which, under loyal disciples of the family, were active in propagating the ideas of the school. When the Saiyid started his activities, the large numbers who flocked to accept him as their spiritual guide would probably have

¹² *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 562.

¹³ Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz was desirous of personally carrying on *jihād* against the Sikhs because of their oppression but he was disabled by old age and weak sight; when Saiyid Aḥmad left Delhi to enroll followers, Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz robed the Saiyid in his (Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz's) white cloak and black turban and sent him off (Nawshahrawī, p. 87).

¹⁴ Sindhī, p. 59. The dream is contained in *Amālī-i-'Azīziyah* and has been reproduced by Sindhī on pp. 174 ff. It was natural that minds should turn towards the Afghans when conditions in the subcontinent had so deteriorated. Shāh Walī-u'llah showed confidence in the Afghans by inviting Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī. See *supra*, Chapter IX.



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remained unaffected if the ground had not already been prepared by silent workers. Of course the very fact that he had been accepted by men like Shāh Ismā'il and Mawlānā 'Abd-u'l-Ḥaiy was incentive enough; but this alone would not have produced the spectacular results achieved within such a short time. The force of these observations will be clear as the narrative proceeds. It is of no small significance that the main lieutenants of the Saiyid belonged to the group of the close followers of Shāh 'Abd-u'l-'Azīz.

However, from whichever source the idea came that Saiyid Aḥmad should receive this training in Amīr Khān's camp, it was a fortunate one. There was no other Muslim chieftain whose service could have served the same purpose, because none other among them was actively engaged in hostilities. Of the Pindari chieftains Amīr Khān was the most respectable, and, as his memoirs show, was not devoid of Muslim patriotism. Like the famous British buccaneers, he looked upon his activities as essays at profitable adventure and not as crime.¹⁵ It may be asked how a man of such spiritual greatness could participate in the activities of a Pindari; the answer is that there is no record of Saiyid Aḥmad's participation in any act of plunder; Amīr Khān did plenty of fighting against organized troops; the Saiyid acted as a professional soldier by participating in fair warfare. Opportunities for such warfare were provided only too often, because Amīr Khān frequently hired out his troops to some contestant for power in those days of anarchy and if the contestant failed to pay the promised remuneration, another cause for fighting was provided.¹⁶

No time seems to have been lost after the Saiyid's return to Delhi. Invitations poured in from the Muslims of Robelkhand asking him to visit their towns; these were accepted and a large number accepted his leadership. This was the first phase of his activities and the emphasis was upon the preaching of a righteous life and devotion to the principles of Islam. Emphasis was laid upon the idea of *jihād*, an armed effort in a righteous cause, but there was still no definite mention

¹⁵ Busawan Lal, pp. 207, 208, in which the sack of Kalpi is described, would illustrate the point.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 323 ff.



of any immediate objective. The intention seems to have been to prepare ground for recruitment and support when the actual movement was launched. In 1821 the Saiyid left for a pilgrimage to Mecca; instead of choosing the shorter route from the west coast, he went by river to Calcutta and embarked there for Arabia. His party consisted of four hundred persons; it made the river voyage in a leisurely manner. The Saiyid stopped at many places to preach to the large crowds which gathered to hear him and many enrolled themselves as his disciples. At Calcutta the number of those who sought his spiritual leadership was so great that the custom of his hand being taken into their hands by the disciples had to be given up and his turban was spread out so that the disciples might touch it as a symbol of their acceptance of him as their spiritual guide. There can be little doubt that this enthusiasm of the people was of great help to the Saiyid in making his organization for a *jihād* stronger and more effective.

Saiyid Aḥmad spent about a year and a half in Arabia. There is an unconfirmed report that he also visited Constantinople;¹⁷ this is unfounded, but it stands to reason that the party must have tried to make contacts with other Muslim powers and see if it could hope for support from them. There is little doubt that it must have been disappointed in this quest. The Turks were in no position to render any assistance, nor, for that matter was any other Muslim power. Saiyid Aḥmad returned to India via Calcutta in May 1824; finishing touches were given to the scheme of a *jihād* and he left his home for this purpose in the middle of January 1826.

After mature deliberation it had been decided to fight the Sikh kingdom of the Panjab. The Sikh rule was oppressive and showed extreme intolerance of Islam and the Muslims.¹⁸ The greater part of its territories consisted of areas where the Muslims were in the majority; the Sikhs were still in the process of expanding their rule over the Pathan homeland in the north-west. If the Muslim majority area of the Panjab and the Pathan territories could be liberated, this would

¹⁷ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 563. They also tried to get help from the Wāḥḥābīs without success (Sindhi, p. 111, fn. 1).

¹⁸ Mihr, *Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid*, I, pp. 251, 252.



form a nucleus for further activities. At that time the Panjab was the only area under a non-Muslim government which offered a good testing ground for such a movement; though the Sikhs had built themselves into a strong power, they were still much less formidable than the British. The Pathans were resisting the expansion of the Sikh kingdom into their territories; they not only needed support in this venture, but would also prove good allies, because their own interests were involved and apart from their Islamic loyalties being aroused, their immediate sense of danger would prove an incentive. In such a fight, it was necessary to insure that there would be no hostile action in the rear, and because the western border of the Sikh dominions was solidly Muslim, a *jihād* for the liberation of oppressed Muslims would arouse sympathy rather than hostility. If even half the stories of Sikh oppression that have come down to posterity were believed to be true at that time in the neighbouring areas, they must have aroused strong indignation among the inhabitants of all the Muslim lands and won sympathy for the *jihād*. The most important consideration must have been that the Muslims were still not in a position to undertake active hostilities against the British and that if the Sikh kingdom were attacked from the east, though the *mujāhidīn* would be near their homes and the line of supplies would be more secure, yet it was certain that the British would not permit hostilities against their ally, Ranjit Singh, to be based in their own territories. Besides, they would not permit the creation of an army within their own dominions. All these considerations led to the choice of the Pathan territories as the scene of the action.

The Saiyid and his followers could not reach the area by the direct route, because they could not march through the Sikh kingdom; therefore they had to take a circuitous route through Gwalior, Rajputana, Sind, Baluchistan, Qandahar, Ghazni and Kabul. Apart from the necessity of choosing such a route the Saiyid found in it an opportunity of canvassing for support. In this he met with considerable success so far as the people were concerned, but the chiefs and the states had to be more cautious because of their subordination to the British or because of intrinsic weakness. The Mirs of Sind



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were afraid of hostilities against the Sikhs;¹⁹ Afghanistan was torn by internal differences;¹⁰ Bahawalpur was non-committal for the same reason as the Mīrs of Sind. The Saiyid reached Peshawar, and after a short stay made Naushehra his headquarters in December 1826. An ultimatum was issued to Ranjit Singh who ignored it.

The Saiyid started operations against the Sikhs and was rewarded with success in the beginning, but soon difficulties began to arise. His warriors consisted of Indian Muslims, Qandaharis and the local tribesmen. These last showed greater interest in acquiring booty than in fighting; to curb this tendency some authority had to be imposed. It was, therefore, decided by the fighters that the Saiyid should be accepted as the imam, the supreme ruler.²¹ This step was also justified in the beginning by its results. In place of the tribal confederacy helping the Saiyid, there was now a properly organized government which raised taxes and maintained an army, for a short while as much as eighty thousand strong; but soon difficulties began to multiply. The Sikhs started a diplomatic campaign among the tribal chiefs and succeeded in weaning away from the Saiyid the chief of Peshawar, Yār Muḥammad Khān, who deserted his allies on the battlefield, having first succeeded in administering poison to Saiyid Aḥmad.²² It was considered necessary further to canvass the people rather than rely upon the chiefs. In the meanwhile the chief of Peshawar and his clansmen made preparations to fight against the Saiyid, who was forced to take action against them in self-defence. The fissures gradually increased and nothing that the Saiyid did seemed to improve the situation. In the midst of these difficulties necessitating the transfer of headquarters to Panjtār near Kashmir, the Saiyid was able to inflict a defeat on the French general, Ventura, who was in the employ

¹⁹ The Mīrs of Sind gradually accepted British tutelage because of the fear of the Sikhs; Mariwalla, pp. 80-83, 89-95, 99-110.

²⁰ Mihr, *Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid*, I, pp. 322-324.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 373, 374.

²² Yār Muḥammad Khān, the chief of Peshawar, had previously got poison administered to the Saiyid, Suri, II, p. 341.



of the Sikhs.²³ He had attacked Panjtār and was forced to withdraw, no mean achievement for the depleted forces of the *mujāhidīn*. They now turned towards the recalcitrant tribal chiefs who had created so much mischief. These were defeated and their leaders lost their lives in battle. Peshawar again accepted the suzerainty of the Saiyid.

He, in his effort for reconciliation, raised Sultān Muḥammad Khān, the brother of Yār Muḥammad Khān, the former chief who had lost his life fighting against the Saiyid, to the governorship of the valley. However, the tribal tradition of vendetta proved stronger than the bond of gratitude and, to avenge the death of his brother, the governor incited the tribesmen to murder the tax-collectors appointed by the Saiyid.²⁴ This came as a rude shock to the *mujāhidīn* and the plans of the campaign had to be altered to find a more hospitable soil. The new emphasis was upon liberating Hazara and Kashmir; for this purpose first Rājdwārī, then Bālākot became the headquarters. The Sikhs were given battle at Bhogarmang and Muḥaffarābad, in which the local population sided with the Saiyid. However, the end of the campaign was near. The Sikhs were informed by some local person of a deserted and hidden approach to Bālākot; they marched by this route upon the town. The *mujāhidīn* defended themselves with great valour, but the Sikhs were superior in numbers and much better equipped. Nearly six hundred *mujāhidīn* lost their lives, including Saiyid Aḥmad and his chief lieutenant, Shāh Ismā'il. This happened in the beginning of May 1831.²⁵

The disastrous end of the campaign does not prove that it was misconceived or lacked support. However, the *mujāhidīn* made serious mistakes for which they paid heavily. They did not take into consideration the conditions prevailing in the tribal area. The people could be trained only gradually to bear the burden of organized government. It is not easy for a barren and unproductive territory to pay regular taxes without

²³ Ventura had belonged to Napoleon's army; on the restoration of the Bourbons, he had left France and obtained employment in Iran. Then he came to Ranjit Singh's court and organized and trained his army, Marshman, pp. 367, 368.

²⁴ Mihr, *Saiyid Aḥmad Shahid*, II, pp. 302-322.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 414.



a general improvement in its economic condition. War does not bring about such conditions; it aggravates the difficulties. The area had been the scene of disorders and fighting before the arrival of the *mujāhidīn*; they brought further fighting to the territories. The tribesmen had not been used to the idea of taxation; even today in many parts of those territories the notion of taxation is foreign. The tribesmen cannot resist the temptation to acquire booty whenever they find the opportunity; therefore, in their own bands, they are unsatisfactory fighters where pitched battles are to be fought or towns to be captured. These habits could not be cured overnight. They are ignorant and often they consider their ancient mores to be the dictates of Islam; also these mores should have been respected.

The *mujāhidīn* had among them many theologians who did not have the imagination to see these factors clearly; they were not fighting for any personal aggrandisement; they had left their home and hearth, for an ideal, a cause; this cause was the establishment of an Islamic state in a Muslim area where unbelievers had captured power. They thought it was impossible to do so unless the territories which accepted the suzerainty of Saiyid Aḥmad were brought immediately within the full jurisdiction of the Islamic laws. They ignored the fact that the Qur'ān had not been applied to the Arabs in one day and that to make a people true Muslims requires a good deal of spadework if the hold of other customs and ideas has been strong among them. Then many of the followers of the Saiyid were too rigid in matters that were not essential features of Islam. They had been inspired by the thought of Shāh Walī-u'llah but had ignored his moderation and spirit of conciliation. The tribesmen were staunch Ḥanafīs and they looked askance at the changes in the ritual of prayer which had been brought about by some of the zealous reformers. The Saiyid was moderate in his views and he occasionally intervened, but the tribesmen were suspicious of what seemed to them heretical innovations.²⁶ Then the Pathans

²⁶ Shāh Ismā'il Shāhid had adopted the ritual of raising his hands in the course of prayers, commonly known as *raf' yadain*. Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid once said to him: "Mawlānā, for whose pleasure do you lift your hands in prayers?" He said in reply: "To please God". "Then", said the Saiyid, "for His pleasure please do not do it here". The point was that such a simple deviation from the ritual observed in the area was a source of trouble. Shāh Ismā'il Shāhid had the good sense to accept this advice, but there were many who did not (Sindhī, p. 94).



did not very much like the appointment of Indian Muslims to positions of authority; the Saiyid's difficulty was that it was impossible to get locally all the personnel needed to set up the new government and to organize the campaign satisfactorily.²⁷

There were certain difficulties inherent in the situation. The tribesmen have a long tradition of vendetta; this subjects them to continuous feuds and strife amongst themselves, even at a time of crisis, they often find it difficult to unite against a common enemy. The Sikhs were able to take advantage of this trend; to the *mujāhidīn* it was a serious handicap. Only through the combined action of the tribes could the Panjab be conquered, but if one tribe sided with the Saiyid, another for that reason felt hostile towards him. And then the Sikhs were by no means a contemptible foe. They were sturdy; they were still a rising people, full of the confidence of a nation which has only recently carved out a principality for itself, most of it through fighting.²⁸ They had a ruler like Ranjit Singh, shrewd, capable and alert. He had built up a well-equipped modern force, trained by European generals of considerable ability.²⁹ The *mujāhidīn* had to face, with Ranjit Singh on the throne, the same army that gave such a good account of itself when it fought the British after his death and with no leadership worthy of the name.³⁰ The *mujāhidīn* depended upon the meagre revenues of the tribal territories, seldom paid with enthusiasm, and the contributions raised by their friends and supporters in India, in their fight against a well-established prosperous state commanding the loyalty of an active band of zealous and sometimes even fanatical Sikhs. And then, the organizers of the campaign were fighting in territories hundreds of miles away from their homes, with all kinds of difficulties in the way of the transfer of such funds as could be raised. It needed boundless enthusiasm and fervour to face these difficulties, a fervour that pitted theologians who

²⁷ Sindhī, pp. 97, 98.

²⁸ The Sikh slogan has been *Rāj kare so Khālṣā ant rahe nā koi*—only the *Khālṣā* (the Sikh community) shall rule and none else shall survive.

²⁹ For Ranjit Singh's military and financial resources, see Marshman, pp. 399, 400.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 446, ff.



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had led the cloistered lives of college professors and spiritual guides without military training against professional generals like Ventura. These factors made this one of the most tragic and romantic ventures in history. It is not strange, therefore, that the names of the leaders are never mentioned in the Muslim homes of the subcontinent without the addition of the title of *shahīd*, which means a martyr.

This campaign was also unique in the annals of the subcontinent for another reason: it was the first popular movement born of a consciousness of a political duty. Its purpose was not to resuscitate a throne or a dynasty; it sought to liberate fellow-Muslims from bondage and tyranny; there were no personal ambitions involved in it; it was sustained by a people, not by a state or a potentate. It was born of a consciousness created by the writings of a thinker, who had found in their moral regeneration the remedy of his people's ills. It failed mainly because the warriors who fought for their ideals were also reformers, and, in their zeal for their convictions, they did not consider it right to postpone the establishment of their conception of the Islamic law for the sake of expediency, and also because they were pitted against very heavy odds. Had they ever arrived within sight of victory, the British would surely have intervened on behalf of the Sikhs, because they could not permit the rise of a power sworn to fight for the revival of the political supremacy of Islam. They failed to achieve their political objectives; it seems that they were bound to fail; but they did succeed in creating in the Muslim community a burning desire to emulate their example.

The Saiyid was not a scholar, but he had attained considerable eminence as a mystic.³¹ He inspired the deepest loyalty and affection among his followers. His camp was an object lesson in devotion to duty, simplicity, piety, and discipline. He had drawn to himself many a learned theologian and numerous scions of prosperous and noble families.³² Once they joined

³¹ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 559, 560.

³² *Shāh* Ismā'il *Shahīd* and *Mawlānā* 'Abd-u'l-Haiy belonged to the family of *Shāh* Walī-u'llah. *Mawlānā* Wilāyat 'Alī 'Azīmābādī was the grandson of Rafī-'u'd-dīn Husain Khān, a governor of Bihar. Wilāyat 'Alī had been brought up in luxury, to which he was accustomed until he joined the movement. Then he had to go to the jungle to cut wood for fuel, had to cook food for himself and sometimes for others as well and had to prepare mud mortar for building purposes ('Abd-u'r-Raḥīm, pp. 111, 112).



him, they shed their habits of comfort and luxury and lived and worked like the poorest in the land.³³ Their identification with the people was complete. Wherever they went, either on tours canvassing for support or preaching or en route to the *jihād*, people were struck by their self-denial, sincerity and simplicity. It was through their simplicity and disregard for all worldly gain that they were able not only to extend their meagre resources but also to capture the imagination of those who saw in their lives the revival of the early traditions of Islam. These men spent their days in performing tedious duties in connection with the smooth running of the camp or preparations for the next day's march; they did not spare themselves in doing whatever was entrusted to them; they were equally punctilious in the matter of their prayers, the menial duties in the camp, the exercises and preparations for the fighting; their nights were given to devotions; the battlefield saw them impervious to any sense of danger. It was a tremendous tide of moral and religious fervour that surged through their hearts and souls, such as is not witnessed by the world every day. What inspired these men with such intensity had also seeped into the consciousness of the community; the work of generations of workers, which included men of such eminence as the Mujaddid-i-alf-i-thānī and *Shāh* Wali-u'llah, had not proved fruitless.

It has been mentioned that most of these warriors were ardent reformers as well; indeed their zeal for the *jihād* was an outcome of their religious convictions. There were certain reforms advocated by them which were non-controversial, like giving up such un-Islamic practices as objecting to the remarriage of widows and other similar customs picked up by the Muslims in the subcontinent. Condemnation of the excessive respect shown to the tombs of saints and to living spiritual preceptors was not received so well. The most severe controversy arose from a rejection of the rulings of the school of Abū Ḥanifah and the adoption of independent *ijtihād* as the more correct method of practising Islam. In practice this led to the creation of a new code, different in some details from the four recognised schools, based upon the *ijtihād* of some theologians once

³³ All, including the leader, had to perform all necessary menial duties (Mihr, *Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid*, II, pp. 465 ff.).



again crystallized into a school or even a sect. What Shāh Wali-u'llah had attempted was different; he had tried to break the barriers between the different schools and to give the competent scholar freedom to go direct to the sources of Islamic theology; those who claimed to have adopted his teachings succeeded in doing just the reverse. They created another sect more intolerant of differences than the older schools; they attached so much importance to these minor points that they brought about a new fissure in the body of Islam.³⁴ In the zeal of their convictions, they did not realize that they were defeating the very purpose of Shāh Wali-u'llah's teachings and were injuring the cause of the moral regeneration of Islam by raising controversies that were not fundamental. The Saiyid did not subscribe to all the views of his followers like Shāh Ismā'il and he exerted his influence on the side of moderation.³⁵ And yet it was a delicate matter, because these were the convictions of honest and sincere men who attached to them the utmost importance.

For their doctrines they have been called Indian Wahhābis by some European writers.³⁶ There were fundamental differences between the followers of 'Abd-u'l-Wahhāb of Najd and of Shāh Ismā'il Shahid. The former did not reject the four schools of jurisprudence; indeed they called themselves the followers of the school of Imām Ḥanbal;³⁷ the latter were known as Ghair-muqallids, rejecting the complete acceptance of any single school and refusing to tie themselves to any

³⁴ Finally the differences reached such proportions that for a time there was violence between the followers of this sect and others. Indeed a good deal of opposition to the movement came because of these differences; actually the movement itself broke into two camps, which have been described in some detail by Sindhi, pp. 109 ff.

³⁵ See *supra*, fn. 26.

³⁶ For instance, Hunter, at various places, e.g., p. 56.

³⁷ Nadwī, Mas'ūd 'Ālam (in *Muhammad bin 'Abd-u'l-Wahhāb*) quotes (p. 140) *Al-hadiyat-u's-sunniyah* (p. 99) which says: "We (Wahhābis) follow in details and rulings the school of Imām Ḥanbal, the imām of Ahl-i'sunnah; we do not claim (independent) *ijtihād*; but if some *sunnah* of the Prophet becomes manifest to us, we act upon it and do not prefer any one else's opinion over it". The first sentence reads in Arabic:

وإما مذهبنا مذهب الإمام أحمد بن حنبل
إمام أهل السنة في الفروع ولا ندعي الاجتهاد

At another place: "We also follow the Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal's school and do not condemn the followers of the four imāms" (*ibid.*, p. 141).



interpretation, which they believed to be against a clear injunction of the Qur'ān or the ḥadīth. The Wahhābīs strongly condemned Sufism; the earlier Ghair-muqallids at least did not reject it; indeed, as has been mentioned earlier, not only was Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid a Sufi himself, but his chief followers also were Sufis and had accepted him as their spiritual guide in accordance with the Sufi practice; this included Shāh Ismā'il Shāhid, who was one of the chief founders of the sect. Historically there is little ground to establish a connection. The source of the doctrines developed by Shāh Ismā'il can be traced directly to the teachings of the Mujaddid-i-alf-i-thāni and Shāh Walī-u'llah. When the latter went to Arabia, 'Abd-u'l-Wahhāb had not come into prominence and his doctrines had not been developed. When Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid went on his pilgrimage, the Wahhābīs had already been ejected from the Ḥijāz and Wahhabism, having lost its political ascendancy, was virtually confined to Najd.³⁸

However, there is a strong resemblance between the views of the two sects. It was this resemblance which has led many sections of the Indian Muslims as well to call the Ghair-muqallids Wahhābīs. The reason is that the conclusions of the two schools, the Wahhābīs and the Ghair-muqallids are very similar. They are nearer each other than to the rulings of the Ḥanafī jurists. This is due to one factor: the Ḥanafīs give an important place to human reason in the system of their theology and jurisprudence whereas the Ḥanbalīs and the Ghair-muqallids are fundamentalists and are inclined to prefer the literal meaning of the basic authorities.³⁹ Both the schools dislike intensely all innovations that were not found in the pristine days of Islam and condemn all practices that smack to them of idolatry or polytheism. It is not unlikely that some extremist sections among the followers of Saiyid Aḥmad Shāhid were affected by the Wahhābī doctrines of Najd; this has been hinted at by competent scholars;⁴⁰ it is also

³⁸ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 567.

³⁹ The Ḥanafī school uses the principle of *qiyās* to a greater degree; *qiyās* is the use of human intellect in the solution of theological problems. The Ḥanbalīs do not utilize *qiyās* where they think that the authority is quite clear. Of course this is a question of degree.

⁴⁰ Sindhi is quite emphatic on this point (pp. 113, 114).



not impossible that the extremist views of some of the followers of Saiyid Aḥmad Shahid were the natural result of enthusiasm and exuberance. There is, however, little doubt that such extremism did great damage to the cause both among the Pathans and the Indian Muslims.

The rest of the story can be told briefly. The Sikhs removed the body of Saiyid Aḥmad Shahid from the battlefield in Bālākot; they burnt it; the ashes were destroyed. This was done probably to work upon the Pathan superstition that the soul of a man whose body is burnt after his death does not find a place in heaven. However, the disappearance of the body had an opposite effect, the fact that the Sikhs had burnt the body has only recently come to light;⁴¹ it was not known at that time; therefore, many of the followers of the Saiyid, some of them scholars of repute, came to believe that he was not killed but had miraculously disappeared, to appear again at the opportune moment to lead his followers.⁴¹ It must be said to the credit of the *mujāhidin* that they did not give up their effort in the face of adversity, but continued to give trouble to the Sikhs and later to the British, who replaced the Sikhs in the Panjab. This, however, could no longer be serious, because the Sikhs had dealt a severe blow and such a movement cannot be sustained with vigour for too long a period. Yet, in 1863, the British had to send two European and six native regiments against the "Wahhābi" stronghold of Sithana in the north-western hills. The brave defenders held this force at bay and inflicted such severe losses that at one time the government thought of withdrawing the expedition.⁴³

⁴¹ Mahmud Husain, "The Mystery of Saiyid Aḥmad Shahid's Death", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, July 1955; also Wade's despatch to Princep, secretary to the governor-general, Records Office, Lahore. The despatch is dated 17 May 1831.

⁴² This is the well-known theory of *ghaibūbat*, or disappearance (Mīhr, *Saiyid Aḥmad Shahid*, II, p. 446). This belief was peculiarly similar to the belief of the Shi'ahs regarding some imams. Sindhi (p. 116) is of opinion that the leaders of the group which held this belief did not believe in it and had propagated it for the political purpose of keeping alive faith in the movement. Perhaps this was necessary because of the legend and superstition that had grown up around the person of the Saiyid; his death before the attainment of his objectives would have disillusioned some of the followers. It was, however, not unlikely that this belief was sincerely held in view of some of the statements ascribed to the Saiyid.

⁴³ Marshman, p. 526.



There were *mujāhidīn* in the tribal areas, descendants of the original fighters, right up to the establishment of Pakistan, when all cause for war was eliminated. Ranjit Singh had not overestimated the danger when he had deployed his best troops and generals against Saiyid Aḥmad Shahīd, and he celebrated his victory of Bālākot with great public jubilations.⁴⁴

After the conquest of the Panjab by the British, it was natural that the movement should come into conflict with them. In the beginning the British had not been too much worried at Ranjit Singh being kept busy by the *mujāhidīn*, but such a movement after the liquidation of the Sikh power was a different matter. Formerly, the supporters of the movement could even sue in British courts native bankers who had failed to make payments to the headquarters of the funds entrusted to them for that purpose.⁴⁵ British owners of indigo factories and other concerns had become used to granting some of their workers leave periodically for a few months so that they could participate in the *jihād*;⁴⁶ as a matter of fact workers belonging to the movement were highly valued for their honesty and sense of responsibility. However, soon all this changed, because now the movement was directed against the British. The leaders of the movement were tried for high treason and conspiracy, and harsh punishments were meted out.⁴⁷ The quarter called Ṣādiqpūr in Patna was razed to the ground because it had contained the centre of the movement.⁴⁸ After the outburst of 1857 it became impossible to continue a movement whose professed objective was the restoration of Muslim political power.

And yet the torch was kept burning, recruits were obtained for the frontier and there were clandestine collections for the *mujāhidīn* on the north-western frontier. The religious programme, however, needed no secrecy and was fully sustained

⁴⁴ Wade's despatch to Princep, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ *Sawānīḥ-i-Aḥmadiyah*, quoted by Sindhī, p. 107, fn. 1.

⁴⁶ Hunter, p. 12.

⁴⁷ They were tried at Ambala, Malda, Rajmahal and Patna; for details see Thānesari, *Kālā Pānī*; Mihr, *Sarguzasht-i-mujāhidīn*, pp. 371-425; Nadwī, Mas'ūd 'Ālam, *Hindustān kī pahilī siyāsī taḥrīk*, pp. 127, 171.

⁴⁸ Mihr, *Sarguzasht-i-mujāhidīn*, p. 408.



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because the Ghair-muqallids were ardent believers. They form a well-knit group in the Muslim community, and much of the intolerance between them and other sects has considerably softened. For some time, however, the antagonisms were severe; this was the result of a new enthusiasm for reform and its repercussions among other groups who did not like the criticism levelled at some of their convictions and practices.⁴⁹

It is necessary to mention here a parallel movement in Bengal. A Bengali Muslim, Shari'at-u'llah, inaugurated a reform movement which was similar in some respects to the school of Shah Wali-u'llah. Very little is known about the early life of Shari'at-u'llah, beyond the fact that he was born in the parganah of Bandarkhola in Faridpur district.⁵⁰ At the age of eighteen he went to the Hijaz where he studied under well-known shaikhs. After an absence of twenty years, he returned to his native land in the early years of the nineteenth century. Here he worked among the poorest classes of the Muslim community. He soon collected a goodly number of followers who were pledged to perform the duties, *farā'id*, imposed by Islam; hence his followers came to be called *Farā'idis*. His reforms were mainly of the same nature as those advocated by the Wahhābīs and the Ghair-muqallids such as giving up some of the practices that had been adopted through contacts with non-Muslims. Their attitude towards various social and semi-religious celebrations was puritanical and in strict conformity with Islam. Haji Shari'at-u'llah's work resulted in a stricter observance of Islam and made these poor people scrupulously honest and reliable. They cultivated a new sense of self-respect. Haji Shari'at-u'llah did not start a political movement, but he ruled that Bengal was no longer *dār-u'l-Islām* and, therefore, 'Id and Friday congregational prayers could not properly be held.⁵¹ It has been suggested that he had taken his cue in the matter of reforms from the Wahhābīs, but this does not seem to be correct. He had studied under shaikhs at Mecca who were opposed to Wahhabism; in any

⁴⁹ As late as 1920 some workers of the organization were arrested and convicted after trial. It is known as the Qāḍikot case, Mihr, *Sarguzash-t-mujāhidin*, pp. 619 ff.

⁵⁰ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 545.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 547.



case, he himself never professed to be a Wahhābī; one need not be a Wahhābī to advocate that practices that have no sanction in Islam should be discarded.

Ḥājī Shari'at-u'llah's son, Muḥsin-u'd-dīn Aḥmad, became the leader of the Farā'īqīs after the death of the founder.⁵² He is better known as Dādū Miyān. He established a well-organized fraternity with agents at various places to supervise its activities. A good deal of what he did was a logical continuation of his father's teachings. If there was no Muslim government in Bengal which the Muslims could legitimately recognize, they should organize the community to discharge some of the necessary functions of communal life. Therefore great stress was laid upon the ideal of brotherhood and every member of the fraternity had, as a matter of duty, to come to the assistance of his brother who might find himself in distress. Any disputes among the members themselves were not to go before the law courts but were to be settled by Dādū Miyān.

Through a series of measures the British had imposed Hindu landlords upon the peasantry. Dādū Miyān did not object to the levy of lawful revenue but he found it intolerable that a Muslim peasant should be required to pay for the celebration of *Durgā-pūjā*, which as an idolatrous practice, was against his deepest convictions.⁵³ The peasants also showed a new dignity and independence in their behaviour. This earned for the movement the hostility of the Hindu zamīndārs and the British indigo planters alike. These skillfully sowed the seeds of dissension between the Farā'īqīs and other Muslims. Their machinations ultimately saw Dādū Miyān safely in gaol, but through active and enlightened leadership, the Farā'īqī movement continued to be a force in several districts of East Bengal.

It has already been mentioned that Saiyid Aḥmad Shahid twice visited Calcutta, once when he was going to the Ḥijāz for pilgrimage and the second time when he returned to India. At many places en route he stopped to preach to large numbers of Muslims. Indeed Bihar came to occupy an important place

⁵² *History of the Freedom Movement*, pp. 548, 549.

⁵³ *Pujā* means worship. *Durgā*, is a Hindu goddess, consort of Shiva, whose effigies are made and worshipped with great enthusiasm especially by Bengali Hindus.



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in the organization of the movement. Bengal also was deeply affected. Sometimes a Bengali peasant would leave his home and hearth and travel all the way to the base of the *mujāhidīn* to participate in the *jihād*. One of the Saiyid's followers was Mir Nithār 'Alī, commonly known as Titū Mir.⁵⁴ He had a following among the peasants in the districts of Nadia and Twenty-Four Parganahs. His followers refused to demean themselves before the Hindu zamīndārs, who had now started imposing a humiliating etiquette upon the peasants. Some of the zamīndārs began to oppress these peasants; one of their measures was to impose a tax upon beards.⁵⁵ If it is remembered that devout Muslims consider it an obligation to keep a beard, the enormity of such a step will be understood. They arrested the peasants and treated them with gross injustice. The peasants sought justice in the British courts, but the influence of the zamīndārs was too strong. They even sent a representative to Calcutta, but no redress was available even at the capital. Having been reduced to desperation, they collected in a village and barricaded themselves behind a bamboo stockade. They resisted attacks by the zamīndārs as well as the police, who made themselves readily available to support the landlords. At last, however, British troops marched against them. Of course the rabble of the peasants had no chance against disciplined troops and guns, ill-armed and untrained as they were; but even then they fought with the same spirit as other followers of the Saiyid were fighting on a different front. The leader and fifty of his followers lost their lives in the action. Their bodies were burnt; their houses were looted; their relations and sympathisers, and with them many innocent persons, were arrested. It is significant that Titū Mir's rising took place on 19 November 1831, after the disaster of Bālākot had overtaken the leaders of the *jihād* movement. Titū Mir's fate did not deter several able and learned followers of Saiyid Aḥmad Shahīd from spreading his teachings peacefully but assiduously among the Bengali Muslims.

⁵⁴ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, p. 550.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*



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XI

“The Lowest Depths of Broken Pride”

It was to be expected that the establishment of British rule in the subcontinent would not be popular with the Muslims,¹ because they could not be easily reconciled to their loss of political power. Their leaders kept them conscious of the rôle they had played in history as rulers and empire builders. It is difficult for a proud people to reconcile itself to subjugation. The British were aware of these feelings; therefore, it was natural that they should suspect the Muslims of disloyalty. The British, in their desire to strengthen their position, sought allies among people who would look upon the new government as merely a change of masters.² The Hindus thus could be won over to loyalty and cooperation and be used against the Muslims if they pushed their hostility beyond the limits of sullen disapproval. Simultaneously it was desirable to weaken the Muslims so that they should not have the strength to be

¹ See Saiyid Ahmad Shahid's letters, extracts quoted (Mihir, *Saiyid Ahmad Shahid*, pp. 259, 260).

² The cooperation with the Hindus had some fantastic aspects. A British writer depicts the life of Englishmen living in India in the following words: "... with their black wives running about picking up a little rice, while their husbands please them by worshipping the favourite idol" (Mayhew, *Christianity and the Government of India*, p. 48), quoted in Thompson and Garratt p. 318. Ceremonial parades were held in salutation of Hindu deities (Thompson and Garratt, p. 319).

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dangerous. The Muslims showed no inclination to welcome the political change or to seek conciliation with the new rulers; nor did the rulers make any effort to win over the Muslims through conciliatory measures or at least the cessation of policies directed against them.³ Thus the relations between the British and the Muslims went on deteriorating; the British could afford to continue this silent warfare, because they were now the rulers well entrenched in power and in possession of native allies willing to make some kind of common cause with them; but the Muslims were the ruled, and not the entire ruled population but only a minority. Such a game could be played to the injury of only one party, the Muslims; and it continued so long that when it did cease, it was not easy to drag the Muslims out of the mire into which they had sunk. During the time that it lasted, the Muslims found themselves in a vicious circle, because the prejudice against them was so strong that gradually all avenues of progress were closed to them. The only way out seemed to be that of revolt, which in its turn brought even greater hardships. It is true that the pride of the Muslims stood in their way; but it was not pride alone that made conciliation with the British difficult. There were many other factors in the situation that played no less significant a rôle in the reduction of the Muslims to despair.

Even if the Muslims had been differently inclined and had found it opportune to seek conciliation with the British, they would not have found it easy. The very fact that they had been the rulers and still had a political consciousness would have militated against their assurances being taken at face value; a community, placed as the Muslims were, takes time to prove its loyalty; the suspicion that it cannot all of a sudden have cast away its natural feelings of resentment lurks in the minds

³ The situation was not unknown to the British administrators; e.g., Lord Wellesley wrote to the Directors on 22 April 1799 in connection with a conspiracy discovered at Benares: “You will observe that the persons concerned in this treason are almost exclusively Mahommedans, and several of them of high rank. It is a radical imperfection in the constitution of our establishments in India, that no system appears to have been adopted with a view either to conciliate the goodwill or to control the disaffection of this description of our subjects, whom we found in possession of the government, and whom we have excluded from all share of emolument, honour and authority, without providing any adequate corrective of those passions incident to the loss of dignity, wealth and power” (quoted in Thompson and Garratt, p. 231).



of its rulers who are on their guard against subversion. Besides, the attitudes of the British towards the Muslims and the Hindus are also affected deeply by the traditional prejudice in Europe against Islam on the one hand and the sympathy for Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy on the other; the former awakens hidden memories of the Crusades, the latter adds to the pride in a common Aryan past.⁴ Europe and Islam have been neighbours: their relations have not always been peaceful, whereas there have been no such conflicts between the Christian West and the Hindu East. Thus the anti-Muslim prejudice is inherited as a part of history in the West, whereas there is no such tradition of hostility against Hinduism. There was, therefore, present in the minds of the early British rulers of India a bias against the Muslims and in favour of the Hindus. This bias was strengthened by the meek submission generally offered by the Hindu masses and the warlike propensities of the Muslims. The former were affectionately called "the mild Hindus" and the latter were seldom mentioned without some such adjective as "fierce" or "fanatic". It is not surprising, therefore, that these sentiments expressed themselves in administrative discrimination against the Muslims. The wiser policy of making an endeavour to reconcile the Muslims was not adopted until it was felt that the Muslims had been so crushed that they had ceased to be a danger and that

⁴ Max Muller (1823-1900) through his translation of the Hindu texts rendered great service to Indology and made the learning of the Hindus familiar to the West. Spinoza (1632-72) shows traces of Hindu influence in his philosophy. Regarding the interest in Sanskrit literature and studies, see, Hunter, p. 188. He says: "Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson's enthusiastic Sanskrit scholarship could ill brook the expenditure of an Indian grant upon Arabic literature. Under his inspiration, the Court of Directors issued an injunction that the Bibliotheca Indica should be devoted entirely to Indian subjects, upon pain of withdrawal of the £600 a year". It need not be added that Indian, in this, as in many other contexts, meant Hindu. The result of these studies was not only an understanding of Hinduism but also an enthusiasm for it. For instance, compare the unfavourable comments on Hinduism in Mill, I, 133 ff; II, pp. 1 ff., with the writings of later writers. The comparison between Hindus and Muslims in Mill is favourable to the latter. Soon all this changed and Muslims and Islam received scant justice at the hands of British writers. Hostile references to Islam and Muslims are too many in the writings of the British writers of the period to make quotation possible. For instance, Russel wrote (pp. 179, 180): "If we could eradicate the traditions and destroy the temples of Mohammed by one vigorous effort, it would indeed be well for the Christian faith and for the British rule". Russel was one of those Britons who advocated moderation.



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it was dangerous to keep such a large community so discontented. Right up to the close of the last century it was being seriously debated whether the Muslims of the subcontinent could in good conscience be loyal.⁵ The answer, even then, was that they could not; this at a time when the leadership of the community was moving both earth and heaven to prove that it could not but be loyal.⁶ In the midst of legal and theological arguments the simple political truth was forgotten that if a people is prosperous and well-looked-after, it begins to have a vested interest in making conditions stable.

The loss of the empire had not been only an emotional problem for the Muslims.⁷ They had suffered in all respects. A ruling race has many psychological advantages; it has prestige and respect; it has confidence; it has pride. Most of these receive a serious setback under alien rule and leave a sense of frustration in the mind. The advantages are, however, material as well; when they are lost, real hardship ensues. The Muslims had the lion's share in the services of the Mughul Empire; they had retrieved their position to some extent even under the Marathas when the latter had settled down as peaceful rulers; but the position under the British was different. The higher posts were reserved for British personnel.⁸ On the civil side the district officer was invariably a Britisher; mostly his second in command also was of the same nationality. In the lower

⁵ Lord Mayo posed the question: “Are the Indian Musalmans bound by their religion to rebel against the Queen?”. W. W. Hunter's *The Indian Musalmans* was written in answer to that question. Publisher's note to 1945 edition. The book was first published in 1871. Lees (pp. 4-10) also discusses the question.

⁶ Sir Syed Ahmed Khan wrote a series of articles in *The Pioneer* refuting the point of view advanced by Hunter and trying to prove that Islam expected its followers to be good subjects of their rulers. In addition in Hunter's own book are mentioned the efforts of the Muslims to prove their loyalty (pp. 106, 113 ff., 167, etc.).

⁷ There can be little doubt that it had been an emotional problem of great intensity (Hunter, pp. 140, 141). Grant, II, p. 240: “The loss of empire could hardly fail to inspire them (Muslims) with something at least of sullen animosity towards their conquerors”.

⁸ “The most prominent feature in the civil government of the Company is almost the entire exclusion of native agency. The offices held by Natives are only those of the lowest description—such as could not be the object of ambition to any European; and the salary attached to these appointments is such as barely affords to themselves and their families the means of subsistence” (Colonel Walker's reply to the ninth question of the Directors in *East India Papers*, II, pp. 183-184; also, Temple, p. 502).



cadres there was discrimination in favour of the Hindus.⁹ With the adoption of English as the official language many Muslims of considerable ability were reduced to the status of semi-literacy. It was known that the Muslims had not been provided with suitable facilities for English education; yet the change was brought about without a moment's thought being given to their interests. The establishment of the system of *zamindārī* in certain areas where formerly the state had dealt directly with the peasant led to unemployment among the Muslims because they had been employed as revenue officials before the transfer of these lands to newly created zamindārs, who were invariably Hindus because they belonged to the class of “speculators and usurers”, and could afford to purchase land at exorbitant prices.¹⁰

In the beginning the British had maintained the system of courts that had existed under the Mughuls; this was a part of their obligations under the grant of the *diwānī* by the Emperor. With the growth of their power the system was changed, resulting in the unemployment of many Muslims, for they had almost monopolized the judicial services.¹¹ This change was natural, though the Muslims resented it for other reasons as well, yet the resentment might have been considerably reduced if it had been brought about gradually and the personnel provided with facilities for training and continued employment. Various other sources of employment dried up gradually.¹²

The greatest blow came from the restricted opportunities of employment in the armed forces. Apart from the fact that a smaller number of soldiers is needed if the forces are properly trained and disciplined, the British had naturally to maintain a number of soldiers of their own nationality. These factors would not have created so much discontent if, even in the native units, the higher commands had not been denied to

⁹ Hunter, p. 167. The government sometimes went to the extent of excluding the Muslims even from eligibility to apply for some posts, reserving them thus for non-Muslim Indians (*ibid.*).

¹⁰ Dutt, p. 61; Verelst, p. 70.

¹¹ Hunter, p. 158. Hunter, in his statements on the grievances of the Muslims, finds confirmation in Lees, pp. 15-21.

¹² Even the teacher appointed by Warren Hastings to teach him Persian was a Hindu, Raja Navakrishna Sobhabazar (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1843, p. 2200).



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Indians of proved merit and loyalty. One of the chief causes of the mutiny by the sepoys in 1857 was that they did not like a system under which they could not rise higher than risaldars and subedars.¹³ Their salary, even when they had reached the highest rank open to them, was lower than that of a British private.¹⁴ The East India Company had adopted a novel method of rewarding good service; any one who showed high competence and distinguished himself was retired on full pay.¹⁵ The Muslims had looked upon soldiering as a gentleman's profession; previously it was through soldiering that they had often risen to the highest ranks in the land; now they could not hope to do better than a British private. In spite of the fact that the Muslims made such excellent soldiers, they were not preferred for political reasons. As late as the sepoy mutiny of 1857, the Brahmins of Oudh alone formed sixty per cent of the sepoys in the employment of the East India Company.¹⁶

The non-Muslim states offered a fair field of employment to the Muslims. This is why the disastrous effects of unemployment were felt by the Muslims only gradually. Here also two adverse circumstances began to work against them. The number of such states gradually decreased or their resources declined and religious and communal bias began to work against the employment of the Muslims in the non-Muslim states. The number of Muslim states was small from the beginning, because under Muslim rule the tendency had been towards centralization; as the power of Delhi waxed, the provincial dynasties disappeared. When 'Ālamgir I died there were no provincial thrones left. The Muslim rulers, however, had found it politic to permit the existence of Hindu feudatories. The provincial Muslim dynasties which came into existence later were really viceroalties or governorships which the central authority had taken good care to prevent from becoming hereditary so long as it had the strength to do so. Therefore, the Hindu nobles had a hereditary character

¹³ Hunter, p. 151.

¹⁴ Sen, Surendra Nath, p. 21, quoting Holmes.

¹⁵ Jacquemont, p. 23.

¹⁶ Thompson and Garrat, p. 444. Also, Nolan, II, p. 706.



which the Muslim nobility did not possess.¹⁷ When the tide of the Muslim power which had submerged the Hindu principalities ebbed, these were still in existence, whereas the Muslim centres of power mostly disappeared with the receding tide. Only a few hollows still formed little pools and puddles; here Muslim authority had managed to endure after the downfall of the Empire. In these Muslim states, in accordance with the resources of the ruler, the Muslims could still find suitable employment.

However, comparatively few of these were able to save themselves from absorption into the British territories. The rich viceroyalty of Bengal which included Bihar and Orissa was the first to go.¹⁸ The extensive territories of Mysore were the next.¹⁹ The British found excellent reasons to push hostilities against Tipū Sulṭān to the extremes and annihilated him. Tipū went because he was too competent; the rulers of Arcot and Oudh were deprived of their dominions because they were reduced to such impotence that the achievement of efficiency had become impossible for them. The territories of the Nawab of Carnatic were practically mortgaged to his English creditors and that rich and prosperous land had been reduced practically to a slave farm for them.²⁰ The Nawab, a docile and faithful ally of the British, was then removed. The Rohillaḥs had been sacrificed for money; then the ruler of Oudh, whose territories at one time had been prosperous and well-governed, fell into financial difficulties because of the

¹⁷ Many of the Hindu nobles were tributary chiefs who were enrolled as *maṇṣabdars* and were left in possession of their territories. The Muslims enrolled as *maṇṣabdārs* were given *jāgīrs*, or assignments on revenue; these *jāgīrs* were not hereditary.

¹⁸ Battle of Plassey which gave the British real control was fought in 1757; the *diwānī* was transferred in 1765, Thompson and Garrat, pp. 90, 91, 104.

¹⁹ Such territories of Mysore as were annexed were taken in 1792 and 1799 after the Third and Fourth Mysore Wars; the Hindu rajah was given the rest as a feudatory (*ibid.*, pp. 177, 178, 197-212).

²⁰ The Nawab had to take large loans at exorbitant rates from English money-lenders to meet the demands made by the Company and he assigned large tracts to these creditors, with the result that a historian says: “The fields and villages of Southern India were converted into a vast farm, and the tillers tilled and the labourers toiled in order that all the value of the produce might be annually exported to Europe” (Dutt, p. 99).



immoderate demands of the Company.²¹ The British Resident interfered in the routine business of the government; because of divided authority, the administration lost its efficiency;²² on this the Company demanded that the administration should be reformed; however, the conditions under which reforms could be made effective or standards of administration improved, were denied and the kingdom was annexed.²³ The Mīrs of Sind were deprived of their dominions without any moral justification for annexation.²⁴ All this meant that no court of sufficient means was left north of Narbada where Muslim men of talent could find an asylum. In the south the Nizam's dominions attracted Muslims from all over the subcontinent; ultimately there was such a rush that the rivalry between the older inhabitants and the newcomers assumed grave proportions necessitating the imposition of rigid conditions of domicile. Even where the states offered opportunities of employment to the Muslims, these were limited to civil posts. In the army the scope was greatly restricted, because, under the subsidiary alliances, the states were permitted to maintain

²¹ “It appeared that . . . the Nabob had paid to the Company, under different titles, at the rate of eighty-four lacs of rupees per annum; though by the treaty of 1775, he had bound himself to the annual payment of only 31,21,000, and by the treaty of 1781, to that 34,20,000 rupees” (Mill, V, p. 314). The Directors were constrained to remark: “The immense drain of specie from that country (Oudh) of late years, amounting, from February 1783, to September 1794, to the enormous sum of two crores and thirty-nine lacs of rupees (2,39,00,000) exclusive of what may have been sent down to Calcutta to answer the bills drawn for the payment of the troops, and on private account, stands foremost in our opinion, among the causes that have operated so much to its prejudice” (*ibid*, VI, p. 41).

²² Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān asked the governor-general that the Resident should not interfere in the day-to-day administration, but this reasonable request was turned down (Thornton, III, pp. 230 ff.).

²³ It is more than doubtful if the administration was as bad as has been painted by some historians. Mill (VI, p. 256) says: “It is declared, in the strongest and most explicit terms, by several of the Company's servants, best acquainted with Indian affairs, in their examination before the House of Commons, is 1806, that not in respect to army, judicature, or taxation, was the situation of Oude, though viewed with such horror by the Governor-General, more unfavourable, than that of other native governments of India; with which it might truly be regarded as upon a level”. Russell (pp. 57, 58) points out that Lucknow was larger than Paris and more imposing and asks if it could have been the creation of inefficient and corrupt rulers.

²⁴ Charles Napier wrote: “We have no right to seize Scinde, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, and humane piece of rascality it will be” (quoted in Grant, II, p. 141).



only small forces. The Company's troops were available for the prevention of any serious breach of law and order.

The disappearance of the Muslim states raised other problems as well for the Muslims. The various courts were the patrons of learning, poetry, *belles-lettres*, arts and crafts. It was in the decadent courts of Delhi and Lucknow that the great masters of Urdu poetry were given facilities to devote themselves to the cultivation of the Muse; the last ruler of Oudh asked Āmānat to write the first drama in the Urdu language, which was also produced for the first time in his court.²⁵ Even when the Mughul emperor was a pensioner with extremely meagre means, he found money to patronize Ghālib, the greatest Urdu poet.²⁶ When the court of Delhi was impoverished and was not able to give stipends that would save the poets from starvation, they began to migrate to Lucknow.²⁷ By 1856 Lucknow also was gone; there was little incentive left for the cultivation of poetry. The various schools of miniature painting which had grown up at different courts after the decline of the Mughul Empire died as one dynasty after another lost its territories. Only the Rājput courts maintained the traditions of miniature painting, which came to an end much later with the change in the tastes of the rulers.

The courts had been great consumers of the various articles produced by Muslim craftsmen. All the finer qualities of textiles like Dacca muslin and Kashmir shawls were woven by Muslim master weavers. The manufacture of rich carpets was a Muslim monopoly. The rich brocades which had been in fashion both among men and women of means were made

²⁵ *Indar Sabhā*, which is more an opera than a drama; it became the rage and performances were common even in small townships by professional players up to the beginning of this century (Saksena, pp. 261-263).

²⁶ Ghālib was only one of several; the court attached greater importance to Dhawq, because he was the emperor's teacher in prosody and style (for Ghālib, Saksena, pp. 321-339; Dhawq, *ibid.*, pp. 312-317).

²⁷ Of these the most famous was Mir; his lines on Delhi are known to every school boy who reads Urdu. A free prose translation of these lines is "People of the East, you mock at me because I am a stranger and ask me where I come from. Delhi, which was a unique city in the world, peopled by some of the most accomplished men of the age, has now been ruined and plundered through the tyranny of an unkind fate. I hail from that same ruined city" (For Mir, *ibid.*, 145-174). These lines have been quoted in Azād, Muḥammad Ḥusain, *Āb-i-ḥayāt*, pp. 251, 252.



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by Muslims. The manufacture of the more delicately finished jewellery, inlay work in silver and gold, and the creation of many articles of beauty so highly prized by the wealthy classes were almost entirely in Muslim hands. The demand for such articles died out with the disappearance of the courts, which had been the greatest purchasers, and with growing unemployment came a general deterioration in the economic condition of the Muslims. The textile industry of Bengal had been adversely affected by the methods adopted by the servants of the Company, who were permitted private trade.²⁸ A good many weavers were subjected to shockingly bad treatment; they were forced to work for scanty remuneration and long hours; they were sometimes refused permission to work for any one else; in short such short-sighted policies were adopted that the textile industry was permanently crippled in Bengal.²⁹ In the beginning the competition from India was a sore point even with the nascent textile industry in America,³⁰ but later the tables were turned, partly because of the deterioration in India itself, partly because of the protection given to the rising industry in Great Britain, and also because of the new methods of production developed in England which came with the Industrial Revolution.³¹ The textile industry had been the most prosperous and extensive industry of the subcontinent.³²

When the supreme power is exercised in an area by a mercantile company, it is placed in such an advantageous position that private commerce can exist only to the extent that it does not come into competition with the interests of the ruling company. The East India Company was jealous of its rights as a trading company; in the areas directly under its rule, native commerce

²⁹ Bolts, pp. 191-194.

³⁰ In 1816-17, “the cotton manufacturers of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Pennsylvania petitioned for protection against the low-priced goods from England and India” (Bogart and Kemmerer, p. 391).

³¹ Wilson thinks that in spite of the introduction of modern methods the British textile industry could not have been built up so quickly without the policies of the British government and the East India Company (Wilson, Horace Hayman, I, p. 378).

³² The subcontinent clothed itself and the entire littoral of the Indian Ocean, to which it exported cloth in the days of the Muslim rulers.



languished.³³ Muslim commerce had suffered greatly with the growth of the power of the European countries in the Eastern seas.³⁴ The Mughuls had failed miserably in providing protection to their merchants who were engaged in overseas trade; even then they had managed to maintain some commerce between the subcontinent and the Muslim countries, mostly of the nature of coastal trade. Under the competition of the Company this also gradually disappeared. The Company, mostly as a matter of policy, dealt with Hindu traders.³⁵ The Company had adopted a policy of “investments” according to this policy, the utmost economy was practised in administrative and other expenditure and the surplus of revenue thus secured was spent in their Indian territories on the purchase of commodities which the Company exported to Great Britain and other countries.³⁶ The amounts realized from the sale of these commodities were invested in England for the benefit of the shareholders, who thus became sharers not only in the trade of the Company but also in its territories in a commercial sense. In this pattern of commerce, the native trader could thrive only as the Company’s agent. These agents, as has been stated, were almost exclusively Hindu. The Muslim trader who had been in the export trade was thus squeezed out of existence. It is significant that the prosperous communities of traders in the subcontinent come mostly from areas that

³³ “The Company claimed the monopoly of India’s foreign trade. But its servants took up the inland trade in such articles as oil, fish, straw, bamboos, rice, paddy, betel-nut, tobacco, salt, etc. As they got the use of military force they and their agents even began to buy and sell forcibly at their own prices . . . In August 1765, a monopoly was formed of the trade in salt, betel-nut, and tobacco, to be carried on exclusively for the benefit of superior servants of the Company . . . the profits of a colonel were estimated to yield at least £7,000 a year . . .” (Yusuf Ali, p. 214). Private trade was later abolished, but not before the native traders of Bengal had been almost eliminated. Some of the monopolies continued in the hands of the Company; opium and salt continued to be state monopolies even after the Company had ceased to function.

³⁴ As previously remarked, the pilgrims could not sail safely to Mecca without permits from the Portuguese, even when the Mughul Empire was at the height of its glory (Badā’unī, II, p. 203).

³⁵ Throughout history one reads of the Company’s dealings of a commercial nature with “bunyans”, being an English corruption of the Hindi word *baniyā*, one belonging to the Hindu caste of traders. In its original form the word is in use even today.

³⁶ Dutt, Romesh, p. 263.



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lay outside the direct rule of the East India Company.³⁷ They prospered later in the whole of the subcontinent when the Company was relieved by the British Government of its right to trade.

The Muslims were badly hit in the matter of education. There were three main sources of support for the Muslim system of education. The state made grants in money and in land to support learned men who were thus relieved of financial worries and were able to devote themselves to teaching and other academic work. There were several endowments established by the rulers or other men of means. Then there was communal effort which found the means to run a school and sometimes even a college in accordance with its capacity. With the disappearance of the Muslim states, the patronage of the state ceased. At the suggestion of some influential Muslims, Warren Hastings had established the Calcutta Madrasa for training Muslims to serve the Company as at that time it was thought that it was both necessary and expedient “to continue the administration of criminal courts of judicature and many of the most important branches of the police in the hands of the Mohamedan officers”.³⁸ This was the only instance of patronage of Muslim learning under the rule of the Company. The government was tardy in making improvements in the teaching of the Madrasa; even the efforts to provide instruction in English and Western sciences were half-hearted and never made in full earnest.³⁹ The story of Muslim educational endowments under the Company is a sad

³⁷ These are Marwaris (from Rajputana), Gujratis (from Kathiawar and Gujrat), Sindhis (from Sind) among the Hindus; and Khojahs, Bohrahs and Memons (from Gujrat mostly) among the Muslims. Gujrat had been a centre of maritime trade, but so had Bengal. Sir John Malcolm deposed in 1832: “I found to my surprise, that in correspondence with the first commercial and monied men of Rajputana, Bundelkhand and Hindustan (northern India), as well as those of Gujrat, dealings in money to a large amount had continuously taken place at Ujjain and other cities . . . And I do not believe that in that country the introduction of our rule could have contributed more, nor indeed so much, to the prosperity of the commercial and agricultural interests as the establishment of the efficient rule of its former princes and chiefs” (*Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee*, VI, 1832, pp. 30-31).

³⁸ Sharp, *Selections from Educational Records*, I, pp. 7-9; *Revenue Consultation*, 21 January, 1785, *Bengal Past and Present*, VIII, pp. 109-111.

³⁹ English classes were not opened in the Madrasa until 1828. For deplorable conditions in the matter of discipline and curricula, see Hunter, pp. 193 ff.



one and betrays its anti-Muslim bias. Their funds were diverted to finance public institutions meant for all and the interests of the Muslims were not specially safeguarded.⁴⁰ If the antipathy of the Muslims for purely secular education is taken into consideration, the diversion of these funds meant, in actual fact, that Muslim money was being spent solely for the benefit of non-Muslims. The first step to earmark the funds for the benefit of the Muslims alone was not taken until several years later.⁴¹ Throughout the subcontinent there were many lands held in *in'ām* or revenue-free tenure for pious purposes. The income of most of these was devoted to education. A strict inquiry into these titles was instituted, unreasonable proofs were demanded, and a large proportion of the grants was revoked.⁴² It became difficult for the Muslims to run the schools needed for the education of their children when they were deprived of these facilities on the one hand and had been impoverished economically on the other.⁴³

This raises the question: Why did the Muslims abstain from taking advantage of the institutions provided by the state? In particular, why did they dislike the acquirement of proficiency in English and the new knowledge which were the gateways to progress and prosperity under the new circumstances? The foremost reason, it must be conceded, was their pride in their own culture and traditions.⁴⁴ In their mind it was impossible

⁴⁰ As an example there was the Muhsin Trust, for whose fate see Hunter, pp. 178 ff.

⁴¹ Temple, pp. 410, 411.

⁴² For Resumption Proceedings, as they were called, see Hunter, pp. 176-178. Financially the gain was 6% of the money spent upon the proceedings that could have been attained in other ways. Proofs of ownership were demanded which in those circumstances could not be furnished. The possession in most cases was not fraudulent. The worst sufferers were Muslim educational foundations, which were mostly wiped out (*ibid.*).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁴⁴ This was not utterly unjustified. Sleeman said in the nineteenth century: "The best of us Europeans feel our deficiencies in conversation with Mahomedans of high rank and education, when we are called upon to talk subjects beyond the every-day occurrences of life" (Sleeman, II, p. 53).

Lees (p. 52) says: "Under Mohammadan rule, there was always a large literary class spread throughout India. The last vestiges of this class still exist, but they are reduced in circumstances and are scattered so far and wide, that they may almost be said to have disappeared. The class can obtain no fresh blood, because for a man to devote himself to any kind of learning now is to make mendacity his profession". Commenting on Macaulay's Minute that advocated the adoption of English as the official



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to separate knowledge from belief. Throughout their history they had been accustomed to the idea that the real basis of all knowledge is a faith in the values which are inculcated by religion. Now they were suddenly asked to give up this conviction. It is not surprising that they were not able to do so, even though they suffered terribly in the process. It was not made easy for them to overcome their fears, because it was firmly believed in British circles as well that the impact of modern knowledge would spell the end of “Indian superstitions”. Macaulay had such a pathetic faith in the efficacy of this new miracle of Western knowledge that he thought that within thirty years of the introduction of the new system of education, not a single idolator would be left in Bengal.⁴⁵ The missionaries made no secret of their hopes. They also proclaimed from the housetops that the spread of Western education would result in the demolition of the native religions.⁴⁶ The Muslims, who did not know the true nature of this education, can be pardoned for thinking that this was merely a device to seduce them from their faith.

Even if the missionaries had not been there to sow these suspicions in the minds of the Muslims, there would have been some cause of apprehension in their taking to the new education. In the subcontinent, it was imparted in the beginning with a strong missionary bias; it did result in a crop of conversions among the Hindus who first took to it. After the language, Lees (p. 84) says: “The learning which our native subjects respected and revered, was condemned as more than worthless; their books were pronounced to be of less value than the paper on which they were printed whilst it was blank; and their religions not only reviled but ridiculed as monstrous superstitions”. Lees (p.i.) saw in the new education “attempts to denationalize the peoples of India”.

⁴⁵ In a letter to his mother dated 12 October 1836 (Garraat and Thompson, p. 319).

⁴⁶ Even highly placed government officials made the same claims. Hunter (p. 136) says: “No young man, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, passes through our Anglo-Indian schools [i.e. schools in India teaching English—I. H. Q.] without learning to disbelieve the faith of his fathers. The luxuriant religions of Asia shrivel into dry sticks when brought into contact with the icy realities of Western science”. His missionary zeal finds more enthusiastic expression on p. 205: “I do not permit myself here to touch upon the means by which, through a state of indifference, the Hindus and Musalmans alike may yet reach a higher level of belief. But I firmly believe that that day will come, and that our system of education, which has hitherto produced only negative virtues, is the first stage towards it. Hitherto the English in India have been but poor iconoclasts after all”.



holocaust of 1857, when the British adopted a policy of religious neutrality and education given in the schools and colleges was made absolutely secular, it came to be divorced from all moral teaching. The Christian West does not realize the implications of such teaching. Western education, even when shorn of all overt references to Christianity, is indeed so saturated with the Christian tradition that the Western child does not find himself torn between two worlds. It does not engender a revolt against the values inherent in his own culture. Despite these safeguards, secular education has created an indifference towards religious values in the West which is not to the taste of the believers. This happens even when there are so many institutions which frankly endeavour to give Christian education and so many others which supplement the secular knowledge of the school with religious instruction. Was then the average Muslim of the subcontinent simply obstinate and ill-informed when he thought that if he sent his children to Christian or secular institutions he could expect to see them gradually weaned away from the values of Islam? In all Muslim countries the introduction of Western education has not resulted in any large-scale conversions, but it has posed problems of great magnitude to which they have yet to find an answer. The subcontinent has benefited greatly from its familiarity with the English language and Western thought; vast treasures to which English supplies a key are now available to its intelligentsia. It should, however, be remembered that a very heavy price has been paid for this boon; for every one who attains sufficient mastery over the language to use it properly there are hundreds whose intellectual growth is arrested because of the difficulty of learning through the medium of a foreign tongue. It is difficult to assess the balance of advantage or disadvantage even after more than a century. For instance, who is better off today—Japan, which has acquired knowledge through its own language, or the subcontinent?

The Muslim attitude was not totally negative. When English and modern knowledge were introduced in the Calcutta Madrasa, Muslim students came forward to study them.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Long, J., “Social Conditions of the Mahomedans of Bengal”, *Transactions of the Bengal Social Science Association*, 1869, p. 13. The provision was not made early enough (Lees, p. 25).



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Some of them went to the general schools as well; but they were discouraged when they faced discrimination in employment.⁴⁸ After all, the new knowledge could be attractive only if it brought better opportunities of employment; when employment was denied no attraction was left in it for the average Muslim. In spite of these discouraging factors, there was a changed orientation towards the new knowledge among the Muslims of Delhi which was disrupted by the disorders of 1857. It was not until 1871 that the government thought it worth while to devote some attention to the question of Muslim education.⁴⁹

The Muslims had lost an empire; they looked upon the British as the power responsible for their woes. The loss of the empire had brought in its wake serious dislocation; the government should have been sensitive to the difficulties faced by the Muslims and tried to make their humiliation and economic distress lighter; instead of which policies were adopted that had the opposite results. No serious effort was made to reconcile the Muslims; if there were any favours, they were reserved for the Hindus. Even a stern policy can be pursued with some grace; but the officers of the Company were crude in their dealings with the Muslims. Their racial hauteur had become insufferable.⁵⁰ Even a man of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's loyalty was constrained to remark that the average Englishman in India thought that there were no gentlemen among the Indians.⁵¹ The Muslims were deeply sensitive to such slights. The shame of political subjugation becomes more difficult to bear if it is accompanied with loss of dignity. The ruling race has its prestige to maintain, but it should be done

⁴⁸ Regarding discrimination against Muslims in employment, see Hunter, p. 162.

⁴⁹ Resolution no 300 dated 7 August 1871 issued by Lord Mayo's government. Lees (p. 26) points out that the educational dispatch of 1854 establishing the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras left the Madrasa high and dry.

⁵⁰ As the result of the racial hauteur of the British, the word “native” became a word of abuse in India. The social discrimination is mentioned by Temple, p. 502.

⁵¹ Syed Ahmed Khan, *Risālah asbāb-i-bagh̃īwat-i-Hind*, p. 34. Even in the *ish̃tiḥār* issued by the government to soothe the feelings of the people regarding the activities of the missionaries, the Indians are referred to as “uncivilized because of their ignorance and lack of enlightenment” (*ibid.*, p. 52).



in a subtle manner. It was a difficult situation: the Muslim sulked, nursing his grievances; the British made it impossible for him to overcome his resentment. If there was pride on one side, there was the determination to break that pride on the other. The situation was worsened for the Muslims by the fact that the Hindus proved more pliable; they had been a subject race before, therefore they did not feel hurt by the change. As they cooperated cheerfully and showed due respect to the new rulers, they naturally won their confidence and even affection. The sturdy and warlike Muslim suffered in comparison with the “mild Hindu”. The situation went on worsening; it could result only in a catastrophe. Neither the Muslims nor the British had the foresight to take stock of the situation dispassionately and both of them permitted it to deteriorate.

The Muslims were not pleased with the methods adopted by the Christian missionaries, whose techniques were offensive and crude.⁵² During the first half of the nineteenth century, missionary zeal was common among the civil and military officers of the Company.⁵³ They had been inspired by the statements made in the Parliament that the whole purpose of the establishment of the British rule in India would be lost if this vast area were not won for Christ.⁵⁴ The local officials sometimes acted as missionaries themselves and it was not uncommon for them to walk into Hindu and Muslim religious gatherings and meetings and point out to the audience “the errors” of their faith with plenty of invective and abuse. There was a big famine in 1837; orphans and children whose guardians were not able to look after them were handed over to

⁵² For Muslim reactions to missionary efforts, see Sābirī, pp. 95 ff; also Syed Ahmed Khan, *Risālah asbāb-i-bagh̃āwat-i-Hind*, p. 14. As late as 1897, Sir William Muir wrote: “... let there be no unnecessary wounding of the national feeling, no harsh epithets, no irritating insinuations... because the provoking insinuations, gratuitous severity and supercilious language... are the most powerful adversaries of conviction” (Muir, pp. 41, 42).

⁵³ Also Sen, Surendra Nath, pp. 10, 12.

⁵⁴ Mr. Mangles, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the East India Company, said in the British Parliament in 1857; “Providence has entrusted the extensive empire of Hindustan to England that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Every one must exert all his strength that there may be no dilatoriness on any account in continuing in the country the work of making all India Christian” (Savarkar, pp. 51, 52).



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Christian missionaries. Hindus and Muslims who wanted to look after the children of their own community were refused permission.⁵⁵ Throughout British rule Christian missionary institutions were given charge of foundlings of unknown parentage; but this was done discreetly and no one minded it; but where the parentage and religion of the child was known, it was a different matter and created a good deal of dissatisfaction.

Sometimes the activities of the missionaries were ascribed to the government because of the close association between the officials and the missionaries.⁵⁶ The common man came to believe that the Company's government wanted to convert the entire people to Christianity. He was not far wrong, he erred only in his judgment regarding the lengths to which the Company was prepared to go. The neutrality in religious matters so strongly professed by the government was a later development when the tragic results of an erroneous policy had so strongly manifested themselves. In this matter, the Hindus and Muslims were equally sensitive, though it was the Hindu fold which had lost many more sheep to the missionaries. The fact that the Muslims do not offer themselves so readily for conversion has been a sore point with Christian missionaries and added not a little to the dislike in which the Muslims were held at that time by their British rulers.

The fire went on smouldering until the conflagration of 1857. The immediate cause was the introduction of a new type of cartridge which was greased with animal fat. A sweeper, who worked in the factory where these cartridges were greased, was rebuked by a Brahmin sepoy for asking for a drink of water from his utensil. The sweeper replied tauntingly that soon there would be no difference left between Brahmins and the untouchables, because the new cartridges, which they had not only to touch but to put into their mouths to tear away part of the packing, were greased with the fat of cows and pigs.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Syed Ahmed Khan, *Risālah asbāb-i-baghāwat-i-Hind*, p. 13. Even Syed Ahmed Khan had to hand over the children he was bringing up to Christian missionaries. The orphans had been treated so well that they wailed at being torn from such a kind home, but the British officer was unrelenting.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Marshman, p. 492; Roberts, I, pp. 76, 77.



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The cow is sacred to the Hindu and he can think of nothing so polluting as beef; the Muslims look upon pork as unclean and as an abomination. The news spread like wildfire. The government came out with a contradiction, which, instead of doing any good, created more mischief, because it was not true.⁵⁸ The result was that the *bona fides* of the government was questioned; though it is obvious that the Company could not gain anything by making the sepoys taste beef or pork, such a lapse on their part only displayed extreme indifference towards the religious feelings of their main support in the subcontinent. The Company's government had become so used to obedience that it had come to think that it could do anything with impunity. The folly of some of the officers who made the refusal of the sepoys under their command to use these cartridges a question of discipline can be imagined.⁵⁹ They had taken little notice of the unrest which had prevailed among the sepoys; they were not afraid of provoking them further. The result was that a large number of them mutinied.

It would be wrong to think that the introduction of these cartridges was the only or even the main cause of the mutiny by the sepoys. They had a long list of grievances. This is not the appropriate place for their discussion; besides, so much has been written upon the mutiny that there is little point in repeating it. However, one of the important causes of the dissatisfaction among the Brahmin sepoys from Oudh was its annexation by the British. Apart from the loyalty these sepoys felt for the dethroned monarch, his fall had contributed to the difficulties of the sepoys themselves, because their relations who had been employed by the dynasty of Oudh were now unemployed and had to be supported by the sepoys out of their meagre salaries.⁶⁰ The widespread sympathy felt for the fallen ruler does not support the theory that the people had been so oppressed that they would have revolted if the Company's troops had not been there to protect the hated rulers. The

⁵⁸ Kaye and Malleon, I, p. 381.

⁵⁹ Marshman, p. 494.

⁶⁰ Family ties in the subcontinent are strong, and unemployed relations are helped generously. Among the Hindus, the joint family system imposes responsibility for maintaining those who do not earn upon those who do. Most of the sepoys were Hindus and Brahmins.

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introduction of the new cartridges was only the match that ignited the powder. When the sepoys mutinied, the rebellion became more widespread. In a fairly wide area large sections of the civilian population either rose in sympathy or at least gave the mutineers all the cooperation they asked for.⁶¹ It no longer remained merely a sepoy mutiny.

A tawdry court was still held at Delhi by the last Mughul emperor, Bahādur Shāh Zafar. He was a pensioner of the East India Company and had tenaciously held both to the title and the palace.⁶² He was an amiable old man, with no illusions about his real position,⁶³ more interested in Sufism and Urdu poetry than in matters of state,⁶⁴ of which, apart from the negotiations with the British to get recognition for his favourite son, Jawān Bakht, as the heir apparent to the empty title and the pension, there was precious little to engage his attention.⁶⁵ For his piety and associations with a great past he was held in esteem and affection not only by the people of Delhi but also in the greater part of the subcontinent. In any case he could prove to be a convenient symbol for a revolt against the British, for was he not still, in popular imagination, the rightful sovereign, unjustly deprived of his authority by a Company of foreign traders? His helplessness gave a heartache to all the Muslims who still hugged the memory of the Mughul Empire; the recent intimation from the Company's government to the emperor that his son would not be permitted to hold court in the marble palaces of Shāh Jahān had added to resentment against the British.⁶⁶ The most natural thing, therefore, for the sepoys who mutinied in Meerut, was to march upon Delhi, crowd into the audience hall of the palace and ask

⁶¹ Ball, I, p. 644; Durand, *Life of Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall*, p. 69; *Cambridge History of India*, V, p. 179.

⁶² Marshman, p. 490.

⁶³ In his reply to the sepoys who had mutinied at Meerut and then marched to Delhi and flocked before him, he said: “Who calls me an emperor? I am a *faqīr*, this is like a recluse's retreat, where I live with my family” (Zahīr, pp. 79, 80).

⁶⁴ He has a recognized status among Urdu poets; his poetry was not mediocre as Garrett says in his introduction to *The Trial of Bahadur Shah*. He possessed an elegance of style, a directness of expression and a pathos peculiar to him (Saksena, pp. 208, 209).

⁶⁵ Marshman, p. 491.

⁶⁶ Marshman, p. 491.



the emperor to proclaim with their help a war against the British.⁶⁷

They were received in the beginning with consternation, because no ruling prince or anyone connected with politics, except a few desperate people, thought that the British rule was so easy to destroy. The mutineers, however, were too strong and they brushed aside the points raised by the emperor, who told them that he had neither troops nor finances for such an undertaking. The mutineers protested that they were his troops and with their help he could raise the necessary finances.⁶⁸ Under these circumstances, the emperor assumed authority. It is interesting to note that the administration set up by the sepoys in the name of the emperor did not imitate the pattern of the Mughul government, but it consisted of governors, councils, commanders-in-chief, and the entire military hierarchy, after the British-Indian model.⁶⁹ It is significant that the mutineers, both Hindu and Muslim, should have thought of restoring the Mughul emperor to authority. All the chiefs who rebelled, whether Hindu or Muslim, accepted the suzerainty of the Mughul emperor.⁷⁰

The course followed by the rebellion and its suppression is well-known to history. It threw up some remarkable leaders. Nānā Sāhib, the claimant to the *masnad* of the Peshwas, whose reputation has been besmeared by the massacre of Cawnpore, took an active part in the organization of the rebellion.⁷¹ Lakshmi Bā'ī, the Rānī of Jhansi, long formed the subject of Indian ballads because of her bravery and courage as the general of her troops.⁷² The Maratha leader, Tāntiā Topī, who

⁶⁷ Aḥsan-u'llah Khān, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Sen, Surendra Nath, p. 75.

⁷⁰ E.g. news item in *Sirāj-u'l-Akḥbār*, Delhi, 25 August 1857, giving the news of the allegiance of various rulers, quoted in Garrett, *The Trial of Bahadur Shah*, p. 191. Various letters have been reproduced as appendices to this book showing that the rebels accepted him as their monarch.

⁷¹ Marshman, p. 501. Nānā had recognized the sovereignty of Bahādur Shāh.

⁷² A popular ballad ran (in prose translation):

You fought very bravely, you brave Rānī of Jhansi.

You bore all hardships, but your troops were well looked after.

You ate coarse food, but your troops were well fed.

You fought well. If you lost, what does it matter?

You fought for your right, of which you were so cruelly deprived by the Firangīs.

You fought well. If you lost your life, it does not matter.

You earned immortality for your name.

I heard it sung in my childhood in the small towns of the U.P. more than fifty years after the Mutiny, and still remember the words.



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fought against heavy odds and acquired a reputation for supernatural powers through his escapades, was responsible for rekindling the dying embers of rebellion after it seemed that the fire had been extinguished.⁷² They are still the heroes of popular stories and folklore, which shows which way popular Indian sympathies lay; the faults of these leaders were forgotten by their Indian admirers because their exploits earned praise as having been undertaken in a patriotic cause.

On the Muslim side as well there was no dearth of capable leaders. Bahādur Shāh was too old and never came to have a grip on the situation; but his sufferings in exile when he was subjected to extreme penury and want excite the sympathies of many Muslims even today. Popular sentiment can be judged from its demonstration a hundred years after the event when its centenary was celebrated both in India and Pakistan. A deputation of citizens from Karachi went all the way to Rangoon to honour the memory of the old monarch by offering floral and other tributes at his grave; a street has been named after him in Karachi and a memorial has been planned. General Bakht Khān who was raised to the supreme command at Delhi had been a petty artillery officer in the service of the Company and as such had little professional knowledge of strategy, yet he stood the siege of Delhi against forces superior in equipment and training as well as professional leadership with considerable ability.⁷⁴ Mawlānā Aḥmad-u'lāh Shāh, a theologian, fought with the acumen of a trained general.⁷⁵ The Shāhzādah Firāz Bakht, who earned the reluctant praise of his adversaries as well, was a resourceful commander and

⁷³ For a brief account of Tāntiā Topī's exploits see Marshman, pp. 514-519. Tāntiā Topī stoutly denied that he had anything to do with the Cawnpore massacres. All European authorities are unanimous that he was responsible.

⁷⁴ "Delhi was now ours, but with the loss of 3,537 killed, wounded, and missing, nearly a half of the whole engaged" (Grant, II, p. 240).

⁷⁵ Called the Moulvi of Fyzabad by British historians. On his death Sir MacMunn says: "This unexpected end to the most relentless of Britain's enemies did more for the pacification of Rohilkhand than all Sir Colin's heavy columns which clave but a momentary passage as a ship cleaves the sea" (p. 247).



a keen fighter.⁷⁶ None of these Muslim generals has been accused of any act of atrocity. They were clean fighters; they fought because they thought it patriotic to do so; they would have found more honourable mention in history if they had succeeded; but then the chances of success were dim, because of the superior strength, leadership, and resources of the British and the fact that most of the ruling princes and many of the provinces had not thought it politic to rise. This does not mean that they represented the popular sentiment; it means only that there were more cautions. The events of 1857 have always evoked contrary sentiments in the minds of the British and the peoples of the subcontinent, but there is no reason why a different assessment of the situation should not be made by the writers of the two sides which should be less emotional and more in keeping with the facts. It is time that such merits as the rebel leaders possessed should receive recognition.

The sepoys were guilty of several acts of cruelty; there can be no two opinions regarding the heinous nature of their crime in shedding the blood of non-combatants, especially of women and children; there can never be an excuse for such deeds. What the sepoys did has been known to succeeding generations of school boys both in Great Britain and the subcontinent, and has been rightly condemned by all decent people.

The references to what was done in retaliation by the British are too few and far between in popular works and are contained only in the primary sources. British officers and soldiers lost their temper and indulged in acts of vengeance which were equally reprehensible, sometimes even more. “Peppering the natives” became a popular pastime for marching troops, who fired volleys into peaceful villages; in certain areas, any slanderer could get a man executed or hanged. The most reprehensible punishments were those which insulted the religious sentiments of the victims. Even a rebel has the right

⁷⁶ Marshman, whose indignation against the rebels finds strong expression throughout, says of him: “With the exception of the Ranees of Jhansi and the Begum of Oude, he was the only great leader whom the rebellion produced, and the extraordinary energy and valour he displayed might have entitled him to a more lenient penalty . . .” (Marshman, pp. 518, 519).



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to be executed in a civilized manner; it was absolutely unnecessary to sew Muslim into pigskins and thrust beef into the mouths of Hindus.⁷⁷ It does not reflect credit upon a civilized government if even under the gravest provocation Muslims are besmeared with the blood of pigs and their dead bodies are mutilated.⁷⁸ It would have been pointless to mention such ugly facts but for the necessity of explaining why the suppression of the rebellion left such traditions of ill-will and resentment. The defeat of the rebels and the severe punishments awarded in the normal course would have been quite enough for teaching the Indians the lesson that a successful armed rebellion against the might of the British was not feasible and would bring retribution in its wake; it was not only unnecessary, but injurious to the interests of the Empire itself to leave the people with a sense of injustice.

The Mughul emperor was tried and convicted of high treason.⁷⁸ The point that he, being the *de jure* monarch, could not rebel against his own agents was ignored by the court which was appointed to try him.⁸⁰ During the period of his trial he was kept at almost a subhuman standard of comfort, confined in a small room with his wife; in this miserable condition he was exposed to public view; curious Europeans were permitted to watch him in his cell.⁸¹ Then he was deported to Rangoon in Burma,⁸² where he and his wife died in penury. That section of the Muslim population of Delhi which did not run away before the fall of the city to the British forces had to bear the full brunt of the fury of the victorious soldiers.⁸³ Those who had fled were not permitted to return

⁷⁷ Russell, p. 161.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Marshman, pp. 510, 511.

⁸⁰ Garrett, *The Trial of Bahadur Shah*, p. 246. The judge-advocate's address displays his indignation and ire and possesses no characteristic of a judicial pronouncement.

⁸¹ Smith, Bosworth, II, pp. 148, 149.

⁸² Marshman, p. 511.

⁸³ A moving description of what happened to the people of Delhi after the conquest is contained in Smith, Bosworth, pp. 146 ff. For large scale hangings, *ibid.*, p. 154. For looting the town methodically and the appointment of prize agents for that purpose, *ibid.*, pp. 146, 147, 155, 156. The male inhabitants were slain wherever encountered when the troops marched in (Grant, p. 278).



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to their homes until much later.⁸⁴

Later scholars have been puzzled by the fact that the Muslims were considered to have been responsible for the Mutiny by the British administrators of the day, because they find that the actual share of the Muslims in the fighting was not as great as that of the Hindus. The general impression among the Britishers at that time that the Muslims were the main culprits seems to be erroneous.⁸⁵ There are various reasons why this impression came to be created. There can be little doubt that the rebellion was more in accord with the Muslim sentiment, because they were the most dissatisfied section of the population. The Mughul emperor became the symbolic head of the insurrection. Besides, the idea of rebellion somehow fitted better with the notion of the "fanatic Mahometan" than the prevalent opinion about "the mild Hindu". The Muslims had a longer record of fighting for political ends, in the sense that it was the Muslim population which had sustained the movement of Saiyid Ahmad Shahid and it was they who were sustaining his successors in the northwestern hills. It must have been thought that if the Muslims did not supply more armed men, it was for the reason they did not have them, because, as has been mentioned already, they formed a minority among the sepoys. Another reason for the impression was that the rebels had adopted the green flag of Islam as their banner in most of the fights. Whatever might have been the reason, there is little doubt that the Muslims were held responsible to a much greater extent than their actual participation justified. To take advantage of this situation many Hindus came forward as accusers, sometimes to save their own necks, sometimes with the desire to enrich themselves at the cost of their Muslim neighbours. The beginning of the rebellion had seen considerable fraternization between the Hindus and the Muslims, but its end brought about great estrangement because the Hindus did much to shift the entire responsibility upon the Muslims.

With the responsibility for the rebellion squarely fixed upon their shoulders, it was only natural that the Muslims should

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸⁵ Thompson and Garratt, p. 443.



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receive the major share of the retribution and they did. Despite the fact that Lord Canning was mockingly nicknamed Clemency Canning by his countrymen living in India, the retribution was by no means mild. There was a large number of hangings, but the blow dealt by the death of the bread winner is not so crushing as the simultaneous confiscation of his property. Large-scale confiscations of Muslim property left the community economically in even more desperate condition than it had been before. Their participation in the rebellion had cost the Muslims so much effort that its failure in itself would have left them prostrate; the large-scale confiscation of property and the death of the leaders made the community so weak that its recovery seemed to be out of the question. This condition continued for some time, so that writing in 1871, W. W. Hunter said of the Muslims that they still exhibited “at intervals their old intense feeling of nationality and capability of war-like enterprise; but in all other respects they are a race ruined under British rule”.⁸⁶ In the words of another writer, they had sunk into “the lowest depths of broken pride, black despair and general penury”.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Hunter, pp. 143, 144.

⁸⁷ Ambedkar, p. 43.



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XII

New Orientations

The Muslim community in the subcontinent had reached a dead end; many of its attitudes had to be changed if it wanted to recover from the state of utter exhaustion into which its policies and efforts had plunged it. This needed a careful assessment of the situation so that feasible objectives could be defined and pursued with some consistency. However heart-rending it might be, such an assessment had to take into consideration the fact that the old dream of a Muslim empire in the subcontinent must be abandoned. The world in which the Muslims had built an empire and sustained it for so many centuries had changed; internationally Islam was no longer a political force of the same vigour as it had been in the heyday of its power. Now the Christian nations of the West had come to the forefront and had developed a strength that defied resistance. Apart from the reservoirs of spiritual strength that patriotism and unity had bestowed upon some of these nations, they had developed techniques of efficient government and effective warfare, to which the East possessed no answer. The supremacy of the Muslims, like an ebbing tide, was being pushed back; even nations that were predominantly Muslim were beleaguered in their own homelands.

In the subcontinent itself, the challenge had come not only

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from the West but also from the non-Muslim communities. In the beginning the armed risings of the latter had looked like the more serious danger, even to such a thinker as Shāh Walī-u'llah, but soon the West had turned the tables on the Muslims and the non-Muslims alike. The non-Muslim communities as well, whether warlike or non-martial, resurgent or decadent, had all come under the sway of the British. Under the canopy of the *pax Britannica*, built up again with such ruthless efficiency after the disturbances of 1857, the various peoples perforce settled down to pursue such peaceful pursuits as were open to them. The only exception was the effort of the *mujāhidīn* on the northwest frontier and their supporters. The disasters which overtook the Muslims after the failure of the revolt in 1857-58 demonstrated most unmistakably not only the futility of an armed revolt against the British but also the isolation of the Muslim community. No foreign Muslim power came to their help; indeed none was in a position to cross swords with the British. Inside the subcontinent the Sikhs had been guided by their dislike of the Muslims to cooperate with the British who had only recently subjugated them.¹ With the turning tide, the Hindus found it more politic to impress the British with their loyalty. Many of them betrayed the Muslims by turning informers against them. As such actions earned rewards, which came out of confiscated Muslim property, some unscrupulous Hindus brought false accusations against their Muslim neighbours. This naturally resulted in resentment against the Hindu community.

There had never been much cohesion or unity of sentiment between the Hindus and the Muslims. No ruling people can hope to win the affection of a subject race to that extent. The best that the Muslims could achieve, they had achieved. They had succeeded in getting their rule liked by large sections of the population while it lasted; when it came to an end there was little burning indignation against them. The Muslims had themselves not aimed at complete fusion with the Hindus; their anxiety to maintain their entity and Hindu exclusiveness alike had prevented the assimilation of the two peoples into a single community. When a people is distinct and separate, it

¹ Smith, Bosworth, 146, 147.



has its own outlook upon life, its emotional reactions are peculiar to it and it has a distinctive view of history. Therefore, it was not impossible to create a distaste for the memory of the Muslim rule in the minds of the Hindus. In the interest of their hold upon the subcontinent, the British made such an effort deliberately;² it was successful within a few decades and brought in its wake ill-will and hostility.

The economic pattern that emerged as the result of the new conditions did not contribute to a sense of solidarity between the Hindus and the Muslims. There was considerable conflict in the interests of the two communities. The large Muslim population of Bengal consisted mostly of peasants; these were exploited and oppressed by the new class of landlords, who were generally Hindus. The decline and the distress of the wealthy Muslim families everywhere drove them to the necessity of borrowing money from Hindu money-lenders at exorbitant rates; the remnants of the property of these families soon passed into the hands of the money-lenders. The Muslim peasantry of the Panjab was chronically indebted to the same class of money-lenders, whose exactions left the peasants with little to sustain themselves and their families. The humbler traders and petty shopkeepers had been Hindus throughout Muslim rule; when the East India Company's trade was abolished, this class found new opportunities. Their economic power began to rise rapidly; the Muslims had only a meagre share in this prosperity. Similarly, for reasons mentioned in a previous chapter, the Muslims were backward in education; and consequently they were not well represented in the professions. The Hindus came to have a comparatively more prosperous middle class, which soon became active and vocal. It acquired a new feeling of strength; it was natural that sometimes this newly gained power should be directed against the Muslims, who could not fail to notice these developments. The Muslims had now only an insignificant part in the life of the subcontinent; the important roles were played by the British and the Hindus; the Muslims hardly counted. This was a far cry indeed from the daydreams of the

² Elliot, I, pp. xxii, xxiii. The anti-Muslim propaganda incorporated in school text-books showed little respect for truth.



revival of the Muslim Empire; the problem now was to save the situation from further deterioration.

It was Syed Ahmed Khan who assessed the situation for the Muslims and gradually chalked out a clear-cut policy for them.³ He was born at Delhi on 17 October 1817 and came of a prominent family of that city. He was educated on orthodox lines and his religious views were those of the school of Shāh Ismā'il Shāhid.⁴ The British writers call the Muslims of this persuasion Indian Wahhābīs, which is a misnomer, yet it came to be known so well that Syed Ahmed Khan often called himself a Wahhābī, though, of course, there was considerable difference between the religious views which he developed and the beliefs of the school to which he had originally belonged. He entered the service of the British government and through his ability and good work became the *ṣadr amīn* at Bijnor in 1855. When the rebellion broke out in that district, he rendered meritorious services to the British cause. He was convinced that the rebellion was a mistake, because the British were too strongly entrenched to be shaken by these methods. He argued with the rebel leader at Bijnor, trying to persuade him to seek conciliation with the British. He did not succeed in this mission, but his services in saving the lives of the Britishers in that area and his other efforts in their behalf were such as to gain recognition. However, his attitude towards the struggle was not dictated by any selfish reasons, for when he was offered a large estate as a reward by the government, he refused to accept it. He was greatly moved by the suffering that followed the revolt and its suppression.

The futility of such conflicts between the rulers and the people, especially when the people were in no position to

³ The scientific transliteration would be Saiyid Aḥmad Khān. He spelt his name as Syed Ahmed Khan, see his signatures in his letter to Sir John Kaye dated 14 December 1869 in *Kaye's Mutiny Papers*, in India Office Library, London. The main authority for his biography is Ḥālī. There are shorter biographies in Urdu, but they are based mostly on *Ḥayāt-i-Jāwīd*. The facts mentioned here have also been taken mostly from that comprehensive source, hence it has not been considered necessary to burden the text with too many footnotes. In English a contemporary work is Graham.

⁴ He wrote several works in his early career supporting the teachings of that school, e.g., *Kalimāt-u'l-Ḥaqq*, *Rāh-i-sunnat dar radd-i-bid'at* (Ḥālī, I, p. 48).



indulge in an armed rebellion, was impressed very deeply on his mind. His first concern after the restoration of the British authority was to soften the brunt of British vengeance. He, therefore, at great risk to himself, wrote a small outspoken pamphlet on the causes of the revolt and sent copies to the members of the British Parliament and others in authority.⁵ There were some among the British officers who did not like this criticism, but there were others who took a more enlightened view and did not question the *bona fides* of the writer, who had taken the precaution of not publishing the pamphlet for public perusal. Even before his despatching the copies to the authorities his friends had tried to persuade him not to embark upon such a risky adventure, but being fortified by his own sincerity, he did not desist from the attempt to enlighten the rulers on the mistakes which they had made in dealing with the people. A conciliation between the government and the Indians remained the cornerstone of his policy.

He could not shut his eyes to the hardships that the Muslims had borne as the result of the British feeling that they were disloyal. He, therefore, set himself the difficult task of removing this idea from the minds of the British. With this end in view, he published *Loyal Mohammedans of India* in which he gave the names and some account of such Muslims as had been loyal to the British government. The motive behind its publication was to show to the British that not all Muslims had been disloyal and that there was no justification for a policy of indiscriminate hostility towards the Muslim community.

These, Syed Ahmed Khan believed, were merely palliatives. He must do something of a deeper and more lasting nature to bridge the gulf between his community and the British. He came to the conclusion that the fundamental cause of the hostility between the Muslims and the British was religious prejudice. He was fully aware of the deep-seated aversion in the minds of the Muslims to British rule; if the Muslim community was to be persuaded to shed some of its hostility to the British, it must be asked to cultivate a better understanding

⁵ The Urdu version is *Risālah asbāb-i-bagh̃īwat-i-Hind*. Extracts are given in Graham.



of their faith. He, therefore, wrote his *Tabyin-u'l-kalām*, which is a sympathetic commentary upon the Bible. This book, however, could not be completed because of lack of resources. The basic idea in undertaking this work was to show the Muslims that despite serious differences with Islam, Christianity was not so foreign to their own sense of values and beliefs as they imagined.

Later, in England, when he read Sir William Muir's *Life of Muhammad*, Syed Ahmed Khan realized that the ignorance was not one-sided and that some of the best Orientalists held mistaken notions about Islam and its founder. Though he was in a foreign country and was short of money, yet he wrote his *Khutabāt-i-Ahmadiyah*, which was translated into English and first published in that language.⁶ This was a new venture in the history of Islam, because it was not based upon traditional knowledge and philosophy, but had taken into account the new learning of the age. Besides, this was a book intended not as an exercise in polemics but a sincere effort to explain the values of Islam to a Western public. Syed Ahmed Khan's approach was academic and rational and set a fashion for the Muslim writers on Islam in English. This was the Islamic counterpart of the *Tabyin*. The book also marks the author's break with the extreme orthodoxy of the Muslim theologians, because there were several opinions expressed in the book with which they disagreed strongly.

Syed Ahmed Khan pondered over the causes of the progress made by the West. He rejected the theory advanced by the Christian missionaries that Christianity was responsible for the phenomenon; like many others he reached the conclusion that the strength of the European countries was built upon their intellectual progress, especially their proficiency in the physical sciences. It would be wrong to think that he did not take into consideration the spiritual elements in the progress of the West, because throughout his life he attached the greatest importance to strength of character in the achievement of all objectives, but he did not consider this as peculiar either to

⁶ *Essays on the Life of Mohammed* (London, 1870). Lyall says about this book: "Instead of bigoted contempt and invective, we have now a fair literary argument and a beginning of scholarly exegesis" (p. 245).



the West or to Christianity. With this diagnosis in his mind, he reached the conclusion that his people must first be acquainted with the achievements of science in the West. Syed Ahmed Khan was endowed with great energy and a burning desire to serve his people. He, therefore, made up his mind to chalk out a programme of work. He issued an appeal "to the Indian people regarding the educational progress of the people of India" in which he expounded the need of popularizing the Western sciences, through translations into Urdu, among the people of the subcontinent. The Scientific Society was established in 1863 at Ghazipore, where Syed Ahmed Khan was posted at that time; next year he was transferred to Aligarh and the society migrated with him. His enthusiasm, devotion and energy soon produced results and the Society made rapid strides; it came to own its own building and press and several works were translated into Urdu and were published. Syed Ahmed Khan even put some of his own savings into the project.

This, however, was only a fraction of what he intended to do in the field of education. He was responsible for the establishment of a new school at Ghazipore which was financed by private effort and was later raised to the standard of a college. The addition of just another institution was not what he had wanted; it was useful in its own way and many institutions like it have since played their part in furthering Western education in the subcontinent. His dream was of a university which would be a beacon of light for the Muslims of the subcontinent; which would produce a valuable synthesis of Western knowledge with Islamic values; where students would develop those traits of character that built empires and conquered new spheres of knowledge for the human mind. Where could he get the pattern for such an institution? He himself was not fully acquainted with the system of Western education that had produced these results in Europe, but he must have heard a good deal about it. Therefore, he must go himself and study it at close quarters.

It was not easy for him to find the money necessary for such a venture. He sold his library and mortgaged his residential property and sailed for England. It was during this journey that he wrote his *Khutabāt*. The rest of the time was devoted



to the study of the educational system. He was greatly impressed with Cambridge and came to believe that an institution on that pattern would be suitable for his community. His ideas gradually crystallized and he set them forth in an appeal addressed to the Muslims and the government regarding the education of the Muslims of the subcontinent. It was sent to his friend, Muḥsin-u'l-mulk,⁷ who did not publish it because he was not certain of its reception. It was published after Syed Ahmed Khan returned from England. He had also reached the conclusion that he had to bring about a revolution in the outlook of the people if they were to benefit from his schemes and be persuaded to cooperate with him. He, therefore, started his magazine, *Tahdhib-u'l-Akhlāq*, through which he tried to carry out a programme of reform on a wide front.⁸ Nothing escaped his enthusiastic zeal; from table manners to dress, from what he considered a mistaken outlook upon life to his own understanding of Islam, all was grist for his mill. He succeeded in irritating conservative opinion to an unprecedented extent; more especially his essays in the interpretation of Islam were vehemently resented.

There was, however, a deep purpose behind his writings. He wanted to impress upon the people that modern science did not undermine true Islam; indeed there could be no contradiction "between the word of God and the work of God".⁹ He meant by this that revealed religion is really the word of God, hence it could not violate the laws of nature which are the creation of God. This may well be called the fundamental theme of his writings on Islam; because the word "nature"

⁷ A trusted lieutenant, on whom the mantle fell after Syed Ahmed Khan's death so that he had to run the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College. He started the Memorial University Fund established for converting the college into a university. He was the organizer of the deputation for separate electorates, see *infra*. His real name was Saiyid Mahdi 'Alī Khān. He was, however, better known by his title of Muḥsin-u'l-mulk, which was one of the titles conferred upon him by the Nizam. Some of his essays have been collected in *Tahdhib-u'l-Akhlāq*, volume I, published at Lahore, n.d. For his biography see Zubairi.

⁸ The more important articles published in *Tahdhib-u'l-Akhlāq* have been collected in four volumes, published under the title *Tahdhib-u'l-Akhlāq*, at Lahore, n.d. The first volume contains the articles by Muḥsin-u'l-mulk, the second those by Syed Ahmed Khan, the third by Mawlāwī Chirāgh 'Alī, and the fourth by different prominent contributors.

⁹ Syed Ahmed Khan, *Akhiri maqāmin*, p. 84.



occurs so often, he and all who adopted his programme or ideas were nicknamed *necharis* or believers in nature rather than in revelation. This charge, however, is not justified.¹⁰ It will be discussed a little later; here it is necessary to mention that his efforts at a new interpretation of some beliefs hitherto understood differently created opposition to his educational programme. However, he also succeeded in gathering around himself a small band of enthusiastic workers who gave him full cooperation and proved an asset for the movement.

Undaunted by the opposition and other difficulties, Syed Ahmed Khan established a committee for the progress of education among the Muslims. It started work with the organization of an essay competition to discuss the causes of the unpopularity of the new education among the Muslims. These essays seem to have been of considerable merit because they helped the committee in the clarification of its own ideas.¹¹ A sub-committee was appointed for raising funds and despite growing opposition succeeded in collecting a tidy sum. Syed Ahmed Khan, then, after consulting the donors and other sympathisers, decided to establish the institution at Aligarh. The storm of opposition displayed no signs of subsiding; the institution was meant for the Muslims; therefore it was necessary to remove some misunderstandings. The general feeling was that the proposed institution would teach the "heresies" of Syed Ahmed Khan's beliefs. He, therefore, was persuaded to open a primary school first so that by seeing how it worked and that no effort was made to impose any religious views upon the students, the public might feel a little reassured. The school was, therefore, established in 1875.

This was the humble beginning of the Muslim University of Aligarh, which has played such an important rôle in the life of the Muslim community of the subcontinent. Syed Ahmed Khan felt that the new institution would require all the time he could give it; therefore he retired from service and settled

¹⁰ He only believed that revelation could not contradict or be contradicted by any law of nature; that indeed they confirm each other, see *supra*.

¹¹ The gist of the main points made by the competitors is contained in Graham, pp. 246-248. Graham translates the name of the committee as "The committee for the better diffusion and advancement of learning among Mohammedans" (*ibid.*).



down at Aligarh in 1876. Next year Lord Lytton laid the foundation stone of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College. This was but a partial fulfilment of Syed Ahmed Khan's dream, because he had hoped to establish a centre of Muslim education, where the Muslims would work out their own intellectual destiny. The new college was affiliated to Calcutta University and was, therefore, bound by its rules and regulations. Syed Ahmed Khan had, however, planned on a liberal scale and even when the institution was just a college, it had developed into a big centre of education. The idea of making Aligarh the centre of Muslim education for the entire subcontinent, in the sense of giving it statutory powers to affiliate Muslim institutions, was never realized, but even before it was constituted into a residential and teaching university, it had attracted students not only from the entire subcontinent but also from some neighbouring Muslim countries. Several years after Syed Ahmed Khan's death, Aga Khan III took up the cause of converting the college into a university and, through efforts, made under his leadership, sufficient funds were collected for the purpose,¹² but no agreement could be arrived at between the government and the trustees of the college regarding the territorial jurisdiction of the university in the matter of affiliation, the government refusing resolutely to confer a charter which would enable the university to affiliate Muslim colleges situated outside Aligarh. Ultimately the conditions laid down by the government were accepted in 1921, when the Muslim University came into existence.

No dream finds complete fulfilment. The Muslim University did not develop into a great creative centre which would restore to Islam its traditions of learning and discovery; under the circumstances in which the institution worked, it would have been unfair to demand such an achievement from it. Aligarh, however, did realize a good part of what its founder had hoped from it. It played an important rôle in the development of the Muslim community after it had reached so near the brink of the abyss. It gave it a new hope, a new

¹² A memorial fund for that purpose was started by Muhsin-u'l-mulk immediately after the death of Syed Ahmed Khan. The Aga Khan took up the cause later (around 1910) (Aga Khan, pp. 145-147).



sense of mission. From the deepest despair it pulled the Muslims out into a new field of fruitful activity. It brought up a generation of Muslims who were aware of the new developments in the world and its thought without undermining their fundamental loyalty to Islam. Indeed Aligarh was the cradle of the feeling of nationalism among the Muslims because it kept alive the idea of a well-integrated Muslim community in the subcontinent. Aligarh was not free from defects which were only too painfully obvious to its friends, yet there can be little doubt that without Aligarh, the Muslims would have lagged even further behind the other communities in the political and intellectual life of the subcontinent. All that was good in Aligarh and all its weaknesses were reflected among the greater section of the Muslim intelligentsia.

The establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh was an important part of Syed Ahmed Khan's educational programme for the Muslims, but it was not the entire programme. Though he was opposed to any reckless dissipation of the slender resources of the Muslims, yet he was fully aware of the fact that the Muslims needed many more schools if they were to make any progress. He, therefore, organized the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Educational Conference in 1886 to popularize the new education among the Muslims and to bring the older education more in line with the needs of the community.¹³ The conference became a permanent body and apart from creating a new consciousness among the Muslims regarding education, it served the useful purpose of acting as a clearing house of ideas on the growing and ever-changing problems of Muslim education. As a result of the beneficial effects of the foundation of the college at Aligarh, which soon became clearly visible, the Educational Conference succeeded so well in its mission that the establishment of Muslim schools on the new pattern became the most popular method of service to the community. For some time this kept the leadership so busy that political activity was pushed into the background.

¹³ The Conference later changed its name into Muslim Educational Conference. There are two successor bodies, one at Aligarh in India and the other has migrated to Pakistan, the head office of the latter being at Karachi.



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At one time Syed Ahmed Khan had opposed Macaulay's suggestion regarding the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in the subcontinent; but later he changed his opinions radically. When it was being debated what should be the character of the new universities proposed for Allahabad and the Panjab, he laid the utmost emphasis upon the necessity not only of teaching Western sciences and subjects but also of teaching them through the medium of English. He was not opposed to the imparting of popular education at the elementary stage through the medium of the mother-tongue, but he insisted that at the secondary stage and after it education should be through the medium of English. When the government suggested a greater emphasis upon oriental learning, Syed Ahmed Khan looked upon it with great suspicion and went to the extent of suggesting that the people would take it to mean that the government was not anxious to give them a real education. He attacked the government's new leanings on two bases. The first was that wherever the government had tried to give oriental education, it had failed miserably in attaining the standards prevalent in the old-fashioned institutions; besides, he wanted new education which he considered the prime need if the people were to come up to the level of the West. The old education had now become useless and he did not advocate its revival. He put forward these views so vehemently that he succeeded in preventing the University of Allahabad from laying the same emphasis upon oriental learning as the Panjab University did. This was a matter of great importance from Syed Ahmed Khan's point of view, because with the establishment of the University of Allahabad, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College was transferred to its jurisdiction.

It is easy to find fault with Syed Ahmed's confidence in the excellence of Western education. One can point out the fallacies involved in his insistence upon keeping English as the medium of instruction at the secondary and the university stages; it can be easily demonstrated that there are better methods of acquiring Western knowledge than stunting the mental growth of generations of students by forcing them to study intricate subjects through the medium of a foreign language which only a talented few come to master fully. After



the better part of a century, one can point to the comparatively sterile nature of the system developed in the subcontinent. These aspects of the problem were ignored completely by Syed Ahmed Khan which shows the serious limitations under which he was thinking. It should, however, be admitted that it was not in his power to create a system of education to his liking. He was not a free agent, because he was a member of a subject people and had to make the best use of the opportunities that offered themselves to him. His mission was to bring the Muslims up to the level of the other communities and this, at that time, could be done only by learning the language of the British with a degree of proficiency that would reduce to some extent the distance between the rulers and the ruled. Besides, translation follows the study of a subject in the language in which it can be learnt in a satisfactory manner. If and when the Muslims were in a position to follow up their study of the new subjects with translations in their language and then embark upon original work on their own, Syed Ahmed Khan would have wished them success, but the immediate need was of mastering both the sciences and the language that offered a key to them. His fear was that reversion to oriental studies would put the hands of the clock back.¹⁴

Syed Ahmed Khan was criticized for his religious views; even today a good deal of what he said is not considered to be sound. His critics say that he was not equipped to take upon himself the duties of a theologian. There are some who argue that he need not have entangled himself in theological matters because then he would have encountered much less difficulty in his major task of furthering the cause of education among the Muslims. His critics, however, forget that religious opinions are not a matter of convenience; a man believes what he considers to be true. The eternal principles of religion can be understood only in terms of a man's knowledge. If Syed Ahmed Khan was anxious that the Muslim youth should acquire the new knowledge, he was too circumspect not to know from the beginning that it was bound to affect Muslim thinking profoundly. He could not be ignorant of the havoc that

¹⁴ Syed Ahmed Khan's statement before the Education Commission quoted in Graham, pp. 313-316.



Western education had played with the religious beliefs of the Hindu students.¹⁵ It would, therefore, have been short-sighted for him not to seek some consistency between the truths he wanted Muslim young men to learn and their religious convictions. It is the first shock in these matters that is the most devastating, because the mind is stunned by unfamiliar verities and is not able to put them in their proper perspective. Darwin's theory of evolution no longer evokes the reactions in Christendom that it did in the early days. Syed Ahmed was, therefore, more than justified in his probings into the relationship between Islam and science. After all he sought only to underline the claim of Islam that it can be accepted without any violence to human reason.

He was a pioneer in taking the Muslim mind away from the explanations that had been built up in response to Greek philosophy and in place of speculative thought he brought in the observed facts of natural sciences as an aid to understanding the teachings and thought of the Qur'ān. He was a human being, and, therefore, far from being infallible; hence he made mistakes, but the basic ideas in his exposition are not unsound. He showed the path on which considerable religious thinking among the educated Muslims of the subcontinent has progressed.¹⁶ He was one of the earliest modernists in the history of Islamic thought and his path was not easy, because scientific truth is not static and the believer, who cannot ignore it, has to seek a meaning of the religious truths in the light of his changing conceptions of the universe. Of course he can gain greater stability in his understanding of the truth by closing his eyes to all changes in mundane knowledge, but that way lies stagnation, even deterioration. Syed Ahmed Khan did not create a system of theology, nor did he found a school; but he defined a method for the modern mind continuously to adjust, so far as it is possible, its understanding of religion to the growth of scientific knowledge. Some of his opinions lack

¹⁵ Chaudhuri, Nirad C., pp. 180, 181.

¹⁶ Fortunately it has not crystallized into a sect, but there is little doubt that there is an attempt to understand Islam in the light of modern knowledge. Syed Ahmed Khan himself did not systematize his ideas on religion; the same is true of most current Muslim thinking of the educated classes in the subcontinent.



maturity and do not show the breadth of view that such problems demand; yet a good deal of what he said has come to be accepted by the modern educated Muslims of the subcontinent.¹⁷ In the field of presenting the teachings of Islam in a rational manner to the non-Muslim world of his age as well, he was a pioneer. Without his initial efforts, the confidence that the educated Muslims possess today about the validity of their faith would have remained weak. Men like Syed Ameer Ali walked in his footsteps and rendered great service to the understanding of Islam in the world.¹⁸

Syed Ahmed Khan was a realist in politics. As a Muslim he defined his political creed as radical republicanism tempered with a little economic socialism.¹⁹ However, he said in the same breath that his religion wanted him to be loyal to the government if circumstances made him subservient to a foreign power.²⁰ Thus, whereas he believed in the ideals of democracy, his political actions and policies were governed by the overwhelming consideration that the government was too strong to be shaken by the efforts of the Muslims. He seems to have started with the belief that the Hindus and Muslims had common interests, being the inhabitants of the same land. In the beginning, therefore, his policies were directed towards the achievement of certain common goals; these can be defined as a progressive march towards representative institutions. In his pamphlet on the causes of the revolt of 1857, he laid great stress upon the absence of Indian members in the legislative council of British India. Speaking on a bill to establish municipal and district boards for "local self-government", he expressed great satisfaction at the fact that the Indians were about to learn the principles of "self-help and self-government". Similarly he supported the bill brought by the government of Lord Ripon to bring Britishers and Indians

¹⁷ For the influence upon subsequent Islamic thinking, see Ikrām, *Mawj-i-Kawthar*, pp. 163-175.

¹⁸ Born at Chinsurah in Bengal in 1849, died 1929, author of *The Spirit of Islam*.

¹⁹ Syed Ahmed Khan's, letter to an Englishman quoted in *Nūr-u'r-Rahmān*, pp. 114, 115.

²⁰ *Ibid.*



under the jurisdiction of the same courts.²¹ This aroused a storm of opposition among the British community, but Syed Ahmed stood steadfast in his support of the proposed legislation. When in 1877 Surendranath Bannerji toured various parts of the subcontinent, Syed Ahmed Khan supported his views. Throughout his life he remained a believer in the need of cooperation and good relations between the Hindus and the Muslims.

His political realism, however, asserted itself when he found the Hindus adopting policies that Syed Ahmed Khan thought were not based upon similar feelings of cooperation. The first Hindu movement that disillusioned him was for the recognition of Hindi as the second official language of the North-Western Provinces instead of Urdu. He himself records his reactions in the following words:

When this movement spread to Benares, I was talking to Mr. Shakespeare who was posted as commissioner in that city. I was talking about Muslim education. Mr. Shakespeare was astonished at the tenor of what I was saying. At last he said to me: "This is the first occasion when I have heard you speak solely about the progress of the Muslims; before this you always spoke of the welfare of all Indians". I replied: "Now I am convinced that the two peoples will not be able to cooperate sincerely in any venture. This is only the beginning; later, because of the educated classes, this hostility will increase. Those who live long enough will see it grow".²²

Later developments have confirmed this foreboding. Syed Ahmed Khan was a shrewd observer of events and tendencies. He was able to understand the real significance of the agitation in favour of Hindi. For many years the educated Hindus, like their Muslim compatriots, had used Urdu as their own language; it was only the extremely conservative priests or the semi-literate village folk who wrote the language in Devanagari script; to the Muslims Urdu had been a symbol of their identification with the subcontinent, because to the extent they had taken to Urdu, they had left Persian. Urdu is a mixture of Arabic, Persian and Turkish vocabulary with the native Prakrit

²¹ Known as the Ilbert Bill; for details about the repercussions of the Bill, see Wolf, II, pp. 119-150.

²² Hāli, I, p. 112; Nirad C Chaudhuri gives an interesting account of the growth of animosity in the Hindu mind against the Muslims (pp. 225-232). This is one of the best case studies of Hindu-Muslim relations during that period ever published.



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syntax. This was one of the bridges created by the Muslim community for spanning the gulf between themselves and the native population. In their view the demand for replacing Urdu by Hindi was tantamount to the renunciation by the Hindus of the ties built up in the course of several centuries. This might have been an exaggerated notion; there is, however, not the least doubt that this was a symptom of the desire of the Hindus to revive their own cultural heritage.

In so far as the existing pattern was more deeply influenced by the recent Muslim past of the subcontinent, all efforts at revivalism by the Hindus would be departures from this common heritage and would, in their wake, bring about estrangement from the Muslims. Such conscious revivalism is always the handiwork of the educated classes and its significance is understood also by the corresponding classes in the other communities. This seems to have been Syed Ahmed Khan's understanding of the Hindu agitation for Hindi. As revivalism, once it starts, seldom stops, he was right in his conclusion that time would only make the breach between the communities wider; unless, of course, the Muslims did not resent such activities. However, it had already become abundantly clear that the Muslims would react sharply to all such efforts on the part of the Hindus.

Syed Ahmed Khan's conviction grew deeper. The Indian National Congress held its first session in 1885. He neither attended it nor sent a message of sympathy. On 28 December 1887 he came out openly against the participation of Muslims in the Congress. If the Congress succeeded in the establishment of representative institutions of government in the subcontinent, what would happen to the backward Muslim minority? This was now the question that seemed to be of the utmost importance to Syed Ahmed Khan. He did not expect any improvement in the relations between the two peoples for some time to come; indeed, as would appear from his statement quoted above, he foresaw gradual deterioration. Besides, the Muslim community was in no shape to participate in a fresh struggle against the British. The community needed, more than anything else, some breathing time so that it should be able to remove the more glaring deficiencies in its intellectual

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equipment to face the future. If they plunged into politics, the Muslims could not be trusted at that stage to continue those constructive activities without which they could never hope to compete with others on a basis of equality. He could not see the end of British rule within just a few years; therefore, for the time being he thought that an alliance between the Muslims and the British was desirable for safeguarding the interests of his community.

He did not want to pick a quarrel with the Hindus; if he had opposed the programme of the Indian National Congress simply as a Hindu activity, he might have brought about an alliance of all the Hindus under the banner of the Congress. He, therefore, organized a rival body under the name of the Patriotic Association to counter the influence of the Congress. This body included some of the conservative elements of the Hindu community. Of course such bodies have never succeeded in stemming the rising tide of nationalism. The Patriotic Association died a natural death and was not able to alter the course of events; it only provided Syed Ahmed Khan with a platform for the time being from which to oppose the Congress. The lack of homogeneity in the population of the subcontinent was the main argument advanced by Syed Ahmed Khan. He said that democracy can succeed only where there are no sharp distinctions between the different sections of the population.²³ In the subcontinent, he argued, even among the Hindus, there were such acute differences of race and culture that it was not possible to run a truly democratic form of government.

His main concern, however, was with the fate of the Muslim community under such a dispensation. If he had not discerned in the behaviour of the Hindu community trends that were likely to take them farther away from the Muslims, his attitude might have been, perhaps, a little softer. Having been brought up initially in the traditions of the House of Shāh Walī-u'llah, he was not unaware of the struggle of the Muslims throughout the ages to maintain their separate entity.²⁴ This was the reason why he almost invariably thought

²³ Syed Ahmed Khan, *Ākhiri moqāmin*, p. 46. Compare Lees, p. vi, who talks of "that congeries of Nationalities, called Her Majesty's Indian Empire".

²⁴ Syed Ahmed Khan was a pupil of Mawlānā Mamlūk 'Alī who belonged to the school of Shāh Walī-u'llah (Sindhi, p. 214.)



of the Hindus and Muslims as separate entities. Even where he preached the need of unity, he spoke of the two communities separately, without whose equal progress India as a whole could not prosper. In a situation when the question of the departure of the British from the subcontinent was unlikely to rise for considerable time to come, there was no point in raising theoretical problems, but the context of Syed Ahmed Khan's writings, speeches and work shows that he believed in the Muslims being a nation; once or twice he went out of his way to say that all the inhabitants of the subcontinent formed a single nation; but then he also repeated the observation of the Qur'ān that all human beings were a single nation.²⁵ There can be little doubt that as time went on his conviction that the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims were fundamental grew stronger and more deep-seated. Any other idea would have been anachronistic; the *Tribune*, a Hindu newspaper of Lahore, wrote in 1884 in connection with his visit that the Hindus and the Muslims should "if they want this country to rise to its ancient glory once again, become fused into one nation"; this, "however, must be the work of generations".²⁶ The distinctiveness of the Muslims was so obvious to the Britishers as well that they mostly referred to the Hindus and the Muslims as "the two peoples", or more often as "the two races".²⁷

Hindu sentiment confirmed such opinions. In 1893 the Hindu nationalist, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, organized a festival in honour of the Hindu god Ganesh, who is also known as Ganpati.²⁸ Its main purpose was to create ill-feeling among the Hindus against the Muslims. During the Muḥarram celebrations there had been riots at Prabhas Patan in Kathiawar; these were seized upon as a pretext and leading Hindus organized meetings to agitate against the Muslims. Tilak made the festival almost an exact counterpart of Muḥarram.

²⁵ Nūr-u'r-Raḥmān, pp. 127 ff.

²⁶ Graham, p. 343. As late as 1937. Savarkar said in a speech, "... we Hindus. . . will be a nation by ourselves." (M.R.T., pp. 7, 8).

²⁷ Eg., Graham, p. 343; also, Al Carthil, p.2 20.

²⁸ Edwards, pp. 100, 105. For Shīvāji cult, Chirōl, pp. 46, 47.



Muḥarram has been celebrated traditionally for ten days in the subcontinent; banners and paper models of the graves and mausoleums of the martyrs of Karbalā are taken out in procession; they are accompanied with parties of sword-dancers and fencers who give a display of warlike manly sports; in port towns they wend their way towards the sea where the models are submerged on the last day. All these features were adopted by Tilak in organizing the Ganpati festival; only Ganpati's image was substituted for the paper models of mausolea. The object was to make it pointedly offensive to the Muslims and to leave no doubt in the mind of the Hindus that the aim of giving them this military training was to prepare them for a struggle against the Muslims, who were reputedly braver and more martial. This end was achieved, because rioting broke out against the Muslims. Simultaneously Tilak created the Shivāji cult; the Maratha rebel against the Muslim Empire was now extolled as a hero; his acts against the *malichchhas* were lauded in public meetings and through writings. Tilak, one of the fathers of Indian nationalism, thus built the solid foundations on which were raised the Hindu communal movements of varying intensity from time to time in the coming decades. Tilak had a large following which gradually spread over the entire subcontinent. His first apt pupils were the Marathas and the Bengalis; the latter adopted the dread goddess Kālī, the mother of destruction, as the symbol of their movement in place of the milder Ganapati. Writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterji aroused through fiction and song feelings of hostility against the Muslims in Bengal.²⁹

The significance of these developments was not lost upon Syed Ahmed Khan. His fears of the growth of revivalism among the Hindus were justified by another Hindu movement. This was agitation against the slaughter of cows, because they are sacred to the Hindus. Beef formed an important item in the diet of Europeans as well as the poorer classes of the Muslims. The Hindus organized a society "for saving the cows", which soon spread its branches into every part of the

²⁹ For his biography, Das, Matilal. He was the author of the song *Bande Mātram*, adopted as one of their national songs by Hindus. It occurs in his novel *Anandamath*, part I, chapter X. Also see Durrani, pp. 55-61.



subcontinent, Soon the agitation began to assume ugly proportions. Syed Ahmed Khan had himself once advocated some compromise on the question of killing cows for beef, but this was a different situation, because if the Muslims yielded to this kind of pressure, they would become dependent upon two powers, the British government and the Hindus. The Patriotic Association could not deal with such a situation because it had both Hindus and Muslims as its members; hence it was necessary to organize a purely Muslim body to look after the interests of the Muslims. Thus came into existence the Mohammedan Defence Association of Upper India.

Syed Ahmed Khan died in 1898. His last days were clouded by domestic worries caused by the illness of his distinguished son, Syed Mahmud. It is given to few to bring such profound changes in the outlook of their people within a lifetime as Syed Ahmed was able to do; he brought the Muslim community out of medievalism into the new age; he found it backward and set it on the path of progress so that it might be enabled to meet the demands of a fast-changing world; he found it down-trodden, suspected by its rulers and a victim of its impossible obsessions and left it in a position to face the greatly changed circumstances. He left his impress upon the politics, culture, literature and religious thinking of his people; he will long be remembered as a historian who edited texts and explored ruins,³⁰ a writer who released Urdu prose from the shackles of artificiality and made it flow like limpid waters with natural ease, a religious thinker who laid the foundation of the interpretation of Islam to suit the modern mind, an educationist who was able to think clearly on the educational needs of his community, a social reformer, an ardent philanthropist, and a fearless fighter for justice and truth.

His greatest asset was a realism which removed the cobwebs of sentimental loose thinking; his practical nature always tried to mould the present towards a better future, and he did not believe that the future could be built upon the foundation of an unsatisfactory present. He was not worried by unpopularity

³⁰ He edited Diyā-u'd-dīn Baranī's *Tārīkh-i-Firūz Shāhi* and wrote *Āthār-u'-š-šanādīd*, after a careful examination of the historical monuments and ruins in and around Delhi. The latter has run into several editions and has become a classic.



in a cause that he considered to be worthy; if he was convinced even in a small matter that he was right, he could not be persuaded to deviate from his policies to please either friend or foe.³¹ His first and last love was the Muslim community of India, but this never made him an opportunist or unfair to others. Some Indian writers who have not found the results of his policies to their liking have put forward the absurd theory that towards the end, when he felt irked by the aggressive policies pursued by some Hindu leaders and felt disillusioned about the possibilities of Hindu-Muslim unity, he was under the influence of the British personnel of his college.³² Why should he have come under their influence in his old age when throughout he had shown such courage and independence? These writers should seek the explanation in the movements that were launched by the Hindus for the replacement of Urdu by Hindi, for the prohibition of cow slaughter and for the condemnation of the Muslim past in the subcontinent. These activities might seem insignificant in themselves, but as symptoms of the growing anti-Muslim feeling among the Hindus, they were serious. Syed Ahmed Khan did not need any prompting to see their implications and likely repercussions upon a minority that was still seeking adjustment with a difficult environment. There can be differences of opinion regarding the soundness of his policies; but there is little justification for holding that his policies at any stage were not his own or inspired

The agitation in favour of Hindi grew stronger. It was now achieving considerable success. In 1867 Hindi had been introduced in Bihar; this had encouraged its supporters to demand its introduction in the North-Western Provinces. A centre was established at Allahabad to push the demand; the same year Syed Ahmed Khan submitted a scheme for the popularizing of education through Urdu; the Hindus demanded that there should be two media, Urdu for the Muslims and

³¹ He lost the friendship of one or two very close friends in connection with the Trustee Bill which he drew up for the future management of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, but he did not agree to amend it because he was convinced that he was right (Hāli, I, p. 229-233).

³² This is the thesis of an ardent supporter of the Indian National Congress (Manglori, pp. 275 ff.).



Hindi for the Hindus. The entire scheme was dropped because of these differences. In 1882 the Hindus put the matter before the Education Commission, which did not accept their plea. The pressure continued, until the provincial government put Urdu and Hindi on the same basis as the official languages for certain purposes, where Urdu had been in use hitherto and where it was not feasible to introduce English.³³ The success of the Hindus in securing recognition for Hindi greatly agitated the Muslims and created ill-will between the two communities. The French orientalist Garcin de Tassy summed up the situation well when he said: "The Hindus are opposed to everything which reminds them of Muslim rule".³⁴ The Muslims thought it necessary to establish a body in 1901 to ventilate their grievances under the name of "Mohammedan Political Organization" with headquarters at Lucknow, because the government did not want the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College to get involved in politics.³⁵ Events, however, now began to move too fast. For some time the Government of India had been thinking of redistributing the territories of the unwieldy presidency of Bengal, which at that time consisted of the present Bangladesh, and the Indian states of west Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. By the end of 1903, the proposals were made public. The scheme was finalized and implemented in 1905.³⁶ An incidental outcome was that the new province of East Bengal and Assam came to have a Muslim majority. The Hindu Bengalis were so enraged that an agitation of unprecedented dimensions grew up, which left the Muslims bewildered.³⁷

³³ Manglori, pp. 331 ff.

³⁴ Quoted by Hāli, I, p. 115.

³⁵ The real reason was that the provincial government exercised pressure because the agitation was directed against its action and it was a matter of prestige for the lieutenant-governor of the province. The college could not resist the pressure of the anti-Muslim lieutenant-governor who had already dealt a severe blow to the sister institution of Nadwah (Ikrām, *Mawj-i-Kawthar*, pp. 111-115).

³⁶ For details see Fraser, pp. 365 ff.

³⁷ Fraser says: "... the fact that Mahomedans outnumbered the Hindus in the new province gave infinite offence. . ." (p. 385). The intensity of anti-Muslim feeling in Bengal in this connection has been described by Chaudhuri, Nirad C., p. 229.



It was in this state of apprehension that the Muslims came to know that the British government intended to grant a further instalment of reforms which would expand the existing legislatures and widen the scope of elections. The Muslims asked for permission to send a deputation to the viceroy to put forward their desires so that their position might not be jeopardised in the new set-up.³⁸ The reasons that prompted the Muslims have been summarized by Aga Khan III, who was chosen to lead the delegation, in the following lines:

We were acutely aware that we had long been neglected, that to the Hindu majority—as represented by its leaders in the congress party—we seemed a tiresome splinter in the flesh of the body politic, and that though there was great talk of nationalism, we were not ever considered in the aspirations that were being fostered, the plans that were being laid. They continued to send to the Viceroy's Legislative Council third-rate yes-men, instead of truly representative Muslims, with the result that our separate identity as a community and the status that would have appertained to it had been forgotten by the British.³⁹

The deputation “asked that the Muslims of India should not be regarded as a mere minority, but as a nation within a nation whose rights and obligations should be guaranteed by statute”.⁴⁰ This the deputationists hoped to achieve through “adequate and separate representation for Muslims both on local bodies and on the legislative councils”.⁴¹ The most important principle demanded by the deputation and later conceded and embodied in the Minto-Morley Reforms was that of “a separate communal franchise and electoral roll”.⁴² This was the method which came to be called the system of separate electorates, in which all the voters were

³⁸ There is no convincing evidence in favour of those Indian writers who insinuate that the deputation was inspired by Lord Minto himself. The fact that the demands of the deputation met with favour and even pleased some British circles does not prove that they were inspired, nor does the fact that the viceroy's staff was contacted through the British principal of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, who happened to be at Simla at that time, prove the allegation (Coupland, I, p. 36 fn.). Besides, the demand bears the stamp of having been the natural outcome of the previous trends. Mohamed Ali seems to have based his remarks in his presidential address at Coconada that it was a “command performance” on hearsay (*Congress Presidential Addresses*, p. 620).

³⁹ Aga Khan, p. 122.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 123.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*; also, Coupland, I, p. 34.



Muslims and they could elect only Muslims as their representatives.⁴³ Another important principle that was conceded was that of weightage for the minorities, so that they were given a few more seats than their population warranted.⁴⁴ This proved to be hardly advantageous, because in the provinces where they were in a minority the Muslims secured a few more seats which did not substantially change their position, while they lost their thin majorities in the Panjab and Bengal. The system of separate electorates has invited much criticism.⁴⁵ It tended to widen rather than narrow the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims, it is true; but then it should be remembered that separate electorates were sought as a remedy in a situation in which the Muslims were not returned in sufficient numbers and such as did manage to be returned did not have the confidence of their Muslim constituents. Besides, there seemed to be little hope that the situation would improve, because of the growing estrangement between the communities. The significant fact is that this demand was the embodiment of the principle that the Muslims were "a nation within a nation"

These rights having been secured, it was now necessary to have a political organization that could speak for the entire Muslim community. This was attained by the establishment of the All-India Muslim League towards the end of 1906 in a representative gathering of the Muslims of the subcontinent at Dacca on the invitation of Salim-u'llah Khān Bahādur, Nawab of Dacca.⁴⁶

⁴³ The system continued to exist throughout the British period. It extended only to the territorial constituencies.

⁴⁴ Coupland, p. 34.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 35.

⁴⁶ Aga Khan, p. 125.



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XIII

An Adventure in Altruism

The community bowed before the inevitable when it accepted Syed Ahmed Khan's advice. The new education had come to stay, but how long could loyalty to a foreign government continue to be the main plank in its political policies? The disadvantages of being governed by another country are too palpable to be ignored; they have too great an impact upon the life of the individual to be forgotten. Foreign rule was a fact; in case of its withdrawal, the tyranny of the Hindu majority was only a possibility, which seemed to be too distant to be real. By the beginning of the twentieth century nationalism had become the ruling passion with the Hindus. When the leaders of the sister community declaimed against the foreign rulers from so many platforms and its newspapers inveighed against their policies day in and day out, the Muslims could not remain unaffected for long. Besides, the long tradition of hostility to the British hold over the subcontinent could not be conquered so easily. The Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 created fresh dangers for the Muslim countries that were still free. Having lost its own freedom, the community developed a new consciousness of its ties with the other Muslim peoples and to the extent that Great Britain's policies aimed at establishing its influence or dominance over them, these

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policies were unpopular among the Muslims of the subcontinent and also created emotional reactions that undermined their loyalty to the British government.

Then there were several facets of Syed Ahmed Khan's activities that were not liked in some circles. These factors combined to produce a reaction. It is generally believed that the opposition came from the orthodox theologians and the great theological seminaries like the one at Deoband; this, however, is not correct. The main leaders were men with conservative views, yet not unaffected by the new trends and by no means ignorant of the nature of the problems that faced the community. However, their reactions were mostly emotional and were expressed in forms that appealed to the sentiments which were not quite dead in the hearts of the people.

When an ancient culture seeks adjustment to new forces there do arise situations that are sometimes tragic and sometimes comic; unforeseen anomalies and mistakes may excite ridicule or even deserve condemnation. The Muslim community was no exception when it took to some Western customs and mores. The poet Akbar of Allahabad, who combined a strong sense of humour with a facility for turning verse, seized this opportunity.¹ He was intensely conservative by temperament and disliked many a change that was being brought about by the new orientation of the community towards the West. Fundamentally he was not opposed to the new education, but he was highly sensitive to the deficiencies inherent in its pattern as it had come to exist in the subcontinent. Of many of these the educationists themselves were aware: for instance, education was mostly theoretical and divorced from the realities of the environment; it was so secular that it had been divorced even from the ethical conceptions of the people; its main purpose was to enable the student to earn a livelihood by entering the service of the government, or, at best, to set up a private practice as a lawyer or as a doctor. It signally failed in creating idealism or strength of character. When the newly educated classes, with only a few exceptions, betrayed these shortcomings of character, they did not reflect any great credit upon the

¹ His name was Saiyid Akbar Husain; Akbar was his *takhalluṣ*, a *nom de plume*, which Islamic poets use in their poems. For a short biography and an account of his works, see Saksena, I, pp. 429, 450.



system that had produced them. Akbar also looked upon the institutions established and aided by the government as centres for the indoctrination of the youth in opinions and philosophies basically opposed to the beliefs and ideals of Islam which he thought were being slowly subverted, leaving in their place merely a selfish desire for comfort and security. As Syed Ahmed Khan was an admirer of the new system of education and was not sensitive to its deficiencies, he came in for a good deal of satire at the hands of the poet. Much that Akbar said was purely destructive, yet he also played a constructive rôle in keeping before the community the limits that could not be transgressed without the loss of many elements of value in its rich heritage; he saved the Muslims of the subcontinent from servile imitation of the West and an uncritical rejection of its own traditions. His satire and ridicule saved the community from losing its moorings.

The classical system of Muslim education in the subcontinent continued to exist. It is generally believed that it was purely theological. This view is mistaken; it was deeply impregnated with theological teaching and laid great emphasis upon teaching the theological disciplines; but it had also secular elements. Indeed at one time it had come to be dominated by philosophy; only towards the end of the eighteenth century was the domination of the rational sciences abolished.² With the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, there grew up a deep fissure in the educational tradition of the community, because now the old system came to be identified with theology completely and the new system laid all the emphasis upon the Western sciences and disciplines. The old institutions went on teaching the profane subjects in the old style which had grown out of date; even theology was taught with reference to the old concepts of philosophy which were no longer held valid. No serious attempt was made at Aligarh in the beginning to devise courses in the religious subjects that would bring harmony between the two systems, nor for that matter did the old fashioned maktabas and madrasahs recognize the fact that the introduction of a new system of education in the community would require reorientation of their syllabus if they wanted to maintain their influence over the People.

² Gilani, pp. 175, 176.



Shiblī, who had been a teacher at Aligarh and thus had come in contact with the English members of the staff and had cultivated friendly relations with Arnold, the Orientalist, came to recognize the need to establish an institution where the fusion of the old and the new disciplines might be tried.³ This resulted in the establishment of Nadwat-u'l-'ulamā, which, nevertheless, leaned more and more towards the older system and was able neither to bring about the much-needed fusion nor to establish a reputation, so far as teaching went, of producing graduates who could compete with the products of either Aligarh or Deoband in their respective disciplines. Through the traditions of scholarship established by Shiblī himself, however, they maintained a research institute of considerable importance at Azamgarh, called the Dār-u'l-musannifin, which has numerous productions of merit to its credit. Shiblī himself has left several works of mature scholarship. He was a poet as well; in prose he had a forceful style. Towards the end he came to dislike the pro-government policies of Syed Ahmed Khan and became critical of them. Shiblī was a staunch pan-Islamist and created considerable sympathy among the Muslims of the subcontinent for the Muslims of other areas. In spite of his association with Aligarh, Shiblī never came fully to appreciate its spirit and was drawn away even from those objectives that he had seemed to value at one time. This perhaps explains the fact that the Nadwah never took up modernism in earnest, not even to an extent that would have made its conservation more effective. Perhaps the main reason, apart from personal equations, was the fact that the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College never became a centre of higher research and academically was, like other colleges in the subcontinent at the time, little better than a glorified high school. Scholars like Shibli who did not understand the limitations of these institutions were horrified at the low standards of scholarship at Aligarh and judged the potentialities of the new education in the subcontinent by the deficiencies of its products. Scholarship and research are comparatively new phenomena in the universities of India and

³ Nadwi, Saiyid Sulaiman, *Hayāt-i-Shiblī*, is the standard work on Shiblī's life and public activities.



Pakistan. The result was that Shibli's weight was thrown against the advocates of the new education.

More consistent and vehement opposition came from Aḥmad, better known as Abū-'l-Kalām Āzād.⁴ He was in his earlier days, before he became too entangled in Indian politics, a pan-Islamist; he was a scholar of Arabic, Persian and Urdu and was an accomplished writer. It was only in later life that he acquired a first-hand acquaintance with Western knowledge and English; when he started his life as a writer and a journalist, he was not aware of its real spirit. His own competence as a scholar and the deficiencies in the scholarship of those who were educated in the new institutions and even there had not distinguished themselves gave him a confidence that prejudiced him against the entire system. Only later when he had more extended contacts did he come to have a balanced outlook regarding the potentialities of the new system. There is a tremendous difference between the young Abū-'l-Kalām, the pan-Islamist, and the more experienced politician when his ideals came to be modified by the exigencies of everyday politics. The change is palpable in everything, in views, opinions, approach to problems and even loyalties. They seem to be two different persons; this was not a matter of maturing, or of an earlier promise finding a fulfilment, but of a complete transformation. The young Abū-'l-Kalām thought that any movement confined to this subcontinent could not render any service to the local Muslim community, that a movement to be of some benefit must embrace the Muslims of the entire world;⁵ the older Abū-'l-Kalām emerged as an Indian nationalist and politician. The transformation finds a significant expression in his style of writing; from the indiscriminate mingling of Arabic and Persian words with only the barest skeleton of Prakrit syntax, which was the main feature of his composition in the earlier days, he turned to the use of a simpler language in his later life.

Abū-'l-Kalām was opposed to all that Syed Ahmed Khan had done; he offered the most complete antithesis to the work

⁴ Āzād, Abū-'l-Kalām, *Tadhkirah*, p. 297. Pp. 297-320 give a brief autobiography; also, Desai. He was born in 1888 and died in 1958. For an eulogistic notice, Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, pp. 146, 245-247. See also Āzād, Abū-'l-Kalām, *India wins Freedom*, the greater part of which seeks to justify his policies.

⁵ *Al-Hilāl*, 6 November 1912, p. 19.



of the builder of Aligarh; he approved of nothing that the old statesman had achieved. He did not believe at that stage even in the need of understanding the truth of religion in the light of the new sciences.⁶ His review in Urdu, *Al-Hilāl*, was the vehicle of his earlier views. It fed the Muslims on the food that they liked. Before him, Shibli had popularized among the Muslims the perusal of that part of their history in which they could take a legitimate pride. Abū-'l-Kalām gave them the opiate of a pride in their religion without telling them how it could take the form of a concrete code of life in the new environment.⁷

It was this younger Abū-'l-Kalām who had such an influence upon the Muslim intelligentsia. His writings produced an otherworldly romanticism in the mind of the average Muslim, a romanticism which, instead of producing any desire to retrieve the past through hard work, offered only a pleasant escape from the realities of the present. Perhaps such a romanticism was necessary to enable the community to recapture its Islamic idealism and to think of things higher than just the necessity of earning its daily bread; this romanticism, however, strengthened the destructive tendency produced by the new education of divorcing knowledge from action, because when the mind is fed upon ideas that are irrelevant to the environment, there develops a gulf between conviction and action. Abū-'l-Kalām created emotional attachment to political notions that were incapable of being translated into practice in the context of the conditions prevailing in the subcontinent in those days.⁸ The

⁶ Āzād, Abū-'l-Kalām, *Tadhkirah*, p. 222.

⁷ The well-known Muslim worker and writer, Muḥṣir Husain Qidwā'i, complained in a letter to *Al-Hilāl* (6 November 1912, p. 15) that in the review "the Muslims have been exhorted to put their hand into the hand of God in a series of articles; they have also been invited to go back to the Qur'ān, but at no place has the hand of God been defined nor have those teachings of the Qur'ān been pointed out which can still take the Muslims from the caverns of backwardness to the heights of progress".

⁸ Abū-'l-Kalām was opposed to the Muslim University (*Al-Hilāl*, 27 July 1912, p. 5; *ibid.*, 1 September 1912, p. 9) and to the objectives of the Muslim Educational Conference (*ibid.*, 10 December 1914, p. 438). He advocated full Muslim participation in the Indian National Congress but did not suggest any kind of a previous understanding with the Hindus *ibid.*, 1 September 1912, p. 8; 10 December 1914, pp. 437, 438, and was opposed to the very existence of the Muslim League (*ibid.*, 1 September 1912, p. 8; 10 December 1914, pp. 439, 440). Even if it be conceded that the Muslims should not have thought of safeguarding their



inevitable consequence was that even in the field of religion, whereas he succeeded in creating a pride in the teachings of Islam, he was not able to bring about that conformity between belief and action that lesser men are able to achieve by talking of more pressing and practical matters.⁹

With all its conservatism, the seminary of Deoband, which stood aside from the contemporary controversies, had a practical outlook and concerned itself with its work. It did not throw any stones at Aligarh, though it could not approve of Syed Ahmed Khan's opinions or actions.¹⁰ It had a group of scholars who were no less ardent believers in pan-Islamism than Shibli or Abū-'l-Kalām; they, however, did not carry on any publicity to popularize the idea. They bided their time and, through the institution of the Ḥajj, tried to establish relations with the Sublime Porte. The sultan, 'Abd-u'l-Ḥamīd, wanted to utilize his position as the caliph to counteract the mischief of the European powers who were exploiting religion to create difficulties for him with his Christian subjects. The details of the history of the relations between the leaders of Deoband

political position and should have trusted the majority without any reservations, how could the opposition to the Muslim University and the Muslim Educational Conference be justified? Abū-'l-Kalām's opposition to the new education was the very essence of romanticism. He made the Muslim obsession with educational matters to the exclusion of political activity an excuse for condemning all their educational effort. For a backward minority to put itself completely into the hands of a majority which had not shown much friendliness, in accordance with the advice of Abū-'l-Kalām, would have been the height of romanticism, as subsequent events proved.

⁹ This has been noticed by several writers. Ikrām quotes with approval a remark by a theologian to this effect, *Mawj-i-Kawthar*, pp. 299, 300. A correspondent, who was by no means hostile to *Al-Hilāl*, commented in a letter to the editor: "... we and our reformers, whether they are theologians or non-theologians, do not act upon what they preach, (as the Qur'ān says) 'O ye who believe, do not say what you do not practise'. This is the reason why that pride, unity, grit and determination which you preach are yet the desiderata among us Muslims, and effort is needed to acquire them. Our reformers seem to fall under the category [of those whose sayings are] 'all speech which is not confirmed by action, hence false'"; *Al-Hilāl*, 23 October 1912, p. *jīm*, letter from Mawlānā Muḥammad Ya'qūb, Monghyr. The main reason, however, was that the political and international aspects of Islam received so much emphasis in *Al-Hilāl* that other problems were pushed into the background.

¹⁰ It was in the tradition of Deoband before its leaders got entangled in politics to avoid controversies and devote themselves to their religious and educational work. Aligarh and Deoband maintained a studied neutrality towards each other.



and the Sublime Porte are not fully known because of their secret nature. Their existence was revealed through the activities of Mawlānā 'Ubaid-u'llah Sindhī, who escaped from India to Kabul from where he embarked upon his efforts to rally support for the Ottomans during the First World War.¹¹ Whatever might have been its consequences, this at least was a bold step in accordance with their belief that the sultan of Turkey was the caliph and should be helped when he was engaged in war. They had decided to establish relations with the Turks after it had become obvious to them that the Muslims could not establish their rule again in the subcontinent. For more than a decade before the war, they had been convinced that the British policies were directed against the freedom of the Muslim world. They also had come to believe that this policy was being pursued to strengthen the British hold upon India; it became an article of faith with them that the freedom of India would relieve this pressure, because then there would remain no reason why the British should try to capture the desert lands of Islam. There was a good deal of naivete in this analysis; it was partly the thesis of Turkish propaganda;

¹¹ He crossed the North-West Frontier in August 1915, and after a visit to the camp of the *Mujāhidin*, the remnants of the followers of Saiyid Ahmad Shahīd, he reached Kabul. There he established relations with the Turco-German Mission which was trying to persuade the Afghan government to join the Central Powers. On 18 September, Mawlānā Maḥmūd-u'l-Ḥasan, better known to the Muslims as Shaikh-u'l-Hind, departed for the Hijaz. Earlier, in February 1915, fifteen Muslim students had disappeared from Lahore and a few more from Peshawar and Kohat and found their way to Kabul, after having visited the camp of the *Mujāhidin* on the Frontier. These students were assigned dangerous missions; some of them lost their lives in attempts to fulfil them. Two of the students were the sons of a soldier who was on friendly terms with the Governor of the Panjab. Their servant came ostensibly to tell their father that all was well with them, but he really carried a letter written on silk that had the plans of a rising against the British. Silk was used because these letters were sewn within the lining of the coat that the servant was wearing, hence they are known to students of History as "the Silk Letters". The soldier ferreted out the secret from the servant and the letters were handed over to the British authorities. The letters were intended for a resident of Sind, who was to deliver them to Mawlānā Maḥmūd-u'l-Ḥasan in Arabia. The letters sought to raise the Muslims of the world against the Allies, especially against the British. Their author did not show any real grasp of the situation. Before the letters possibly could be delivered, the Sherif of Mecca had risen in revolt against the Turks and handed over Mawlānā Maḥmūd-u'l-Ḥasan to the British. The Mawlānā had earlier obtained a declaration of *jihād* from the Turkish general, Ghalib Pasha; this was sent to the subcontinent and secretly distributed as *Ghalib-nāmah*. Because of British vigilance only a few copies could be distributed (O'Dwyer, pp. 172, 182) *Sedition Committee Report*, pp. 175-176).



yet, before the discovery of oil, there was an element of truth in it because these lands lay athwart the main communications of the British Empire.

All these streams flowed in the same direction in the sense that if the British were planning the overthrow of the Muslim governments and the replacement of their rule by British domination, they should not be helped to do so by being strengthened in India through Muslim loyalty; if the argument of the Congress nationalists was to be accepted that the fear of domination and tyranny by the Hindus in case the British withdrew had no justification and had been engendered by British propaganda and that the Hindu-Muslim differences had no substance of their own and were being created and sustained by British effort and would disappear the day the British stepped outside the boundaries of the subcontinent, then there was no point in the Muslims not cooperating fully with the Hindus in their movement for self-government; if the basic cause of the British ambitions in the Muslim countries was their anxiety to strengthen their hold upon their Indian empire, the sooner they were pushed out, the better it would be for the Muslims of the world; besides, since the British were themselves making concessions which would one day result in the liberation of India, why should the Muslims not join the side that was to rule the land one day? From whichever side they looked at the situation, they thought that the policy of supporting the British would have to be revised. If the British were to be treated as undesirable or unreliable allies, the Muslim community must seek an alliance with the Hindus.

This provided the dominant trend in the sentiments of the community, but there were second thoughts as well in more careful minds. Could the Muslims entrust their fate fully to the sister community? Were the Hindus at a better level than the British so far as their hostility to Muslim interests was concerned? The British were the rulers; they had taken the plums; but all that was not worth taking had been left in the hands of the people and in the distribution of this the British had recently come to maintain a balance with fairness and justice. At least at the lower level their interests no longer came into conflict with those of either community, hence they



could afford to be fair umpires; could the same be said of the Hindus, whose interests ran counter to the interests of the Muslims in almost every walk of life? The Hindus had not been too fair in their dealings with the Muslims and had even shown animosity in their sentiments towards them. How far could the Muslims trust their compatriots? And what would happen to their concept of the destiny of the Muslim community in the subcontinent as a free and self-respecting people, not subservient to any one else's will, if they chose to ally themselves with the Hindus? Would that purpose be better served if they allied themselves with the British? They were not able to find a satisfactory answer because the existence of a minority in a democracy is subject to many risks. For a minority very often the choice is between two evils. Its path is not strewn with roses. These thoughtful politicians were thinking in terms of some agreement with the Hindus about guarantees for the Muslims to be incorporated in a constitution, which they thought would be drawn up in cooperation with the British. This school of thought will be discussed later; during the first two decades of the twentieth century there was a growing feeling that an alliance with the Hindus would be more in keeping with the dignity and the interests of the Muslims.

It was inevitable that all these trends in the thought of the community, which were not mutually exclusive, should find some synthesis. It was, however, to take some time. In the meanwhile the sentiments of pan-Islam and a desire to see the end of the British rule grew in volume among the Muslims.

The former feeling found a great stimulus in the works of the poet-philosopher Iqbal.¹² Few poets in history have exercised the deep influence which Iqbal came to have over the Muslims of the subcontinent. He started as an Indian nationalist, singing the praises of India and preaching the doctrine of

¹² Muhammad Iqbal, born at Sialkot in 1873, poet, philosopher, scholar, lawyer and politician. Best known as poet and philosopher, and respected for his scholarship. He died in 1938. There is a good deal of literature on him in several languages, specially in English and Urdu. A handy volume is by Singh.



Hindu-Muslim unity.¹³ He did not retract those views in so many words, but with maturity his views were completely transformed. His *patria* became Islam, not a Muslim land or a Muslim people, not even the Muslim world, but Islam itself. He denounced nationalism of any kind in no uncertain terms, blaming it for all the evils of injustice wrought upon one people by another and for the wars which inflicted such misery upon the innocent and the weak. Of all the false gods ever worshipped by man, Iqbal considered the new nationalism, the current concept of "country", as the most destructive and the greatest negation of religion.¹⁴ Nationalism and Islam were irreconcilable; the Muslim could not be wholeheartedly an ardent nationalist, even though his country be a Muslim land. He re-emphasized the doctrine of the indivisibility of the Muslim world; he said that the Muslims could not, if they wanted to be good Muslims, group themselves into Turks, Arabs, Iranis, Afghans, and Indians, because the notion of such divisions is not only foreign but abhorrent to Islam.¹⁵ He

¹³ There are several poems displaying his Indian patriotism, though all of them are early. The best known is in *Bāng-i-darā*, p. 82 beginning:

سارے جہاں سے اچھا ہندوستان ہمارا

Our India is better than the entire world.

Kiernan has some excellent translations. Those dealing with India are 7 (*A new Altar*), and 96 (*Reproach*). A line from the former will show his feelings:

... I see

In each speck of my country's poor dust, divinity.

¹⁴ At one place Iqbal says:

ان تازہ خداؤں میں بڑا سب سے وطن ہے -

Of all these new gods the biggest is country.

Also see Arberry's translation of *Rumūz-i-bikḥudī* under the title *Mysteries of Selflessness*, p. 32; the argument has been summed up in these lines:

Vanished is humankind; there but abide
The disunited nations. Politics
Dethroned religion.

Also, *Mysteries of Selflessness*, p. 55, where he says:

And man creates an ever novel god
Whose joy is shedding blood, whose hallowed name
Is colour, Fatherland, Blood-Brotherhood.
Humanity is slaughtered like a sheep before
This worthless idol.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75: The bond of Turk and Arab is not ours,
The bond that binds us is no fetter's chain
Of ancient lineage.



laid the greatest emphasis upon the doctrine of the Muslim community being not limited in space or time;¹⁶ by this he meant that there has always been a community of believers in the truth and such believers are not limited to any one country. They cannot afford to permit themselves to become divided into hostile or even indifferent groups without losing their sense of mission in history. Iqbal did not approve of a group of passive believers incapable of influencing the world for the betterment of their fellow-beings.

There is little doubt that Iqbal was distressed by the growth of rivalries which were plunging the world into a series of destructive wars. He thought that the conception of a community of believers in the ideal of the brotherhood and equality of all men irrespective of race or colour as advocated by Islam could cure this fatal tendency of competition for the riches of the world which has been the cause of so much human misery; but when he turned to the Muslim world, he found it suffering from the beginnings of the same disease and potentially no better than the rest of humanity. It was divided into states which followed selfish policies like the others; some of the states were breaking up for racial reasons. The animosity between the Arabs and the Turks must have pained him deeply and it was obvious that growing racialism and nationalism lay at the root of these fissures. He, therefore, considered it his duty to warn the Muslims against these dangers; to spread his philosophy beyond the borders of the subcontinent, he began to write in Persian, which was read and understood in several Muslim countries.

Thus it would be seen that whereas Iqbal's outlook is based upon the abiding values of Islam, it was not irrelevant to the situation as he saw it developing in the world and the Muslim countries in particular. This in itself would rule out any charge of romanticism against Iqbal's philosophy; but there was another element in it which would absolve it of such a defect. It was his emphasis upon action; he was not a believer in idle

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35-36: Islam's Community is a divine
Undying marvel . . .
Yet still the voice of the muezzin rings
Throughout the earth, still the Community
Of World-Islam maintains its ancient forms.



beliefs that did not translate themselves into action.¹⁷ Inaction, passivity, inertia and stagnation were abhorrent to his mind. In such a philosophy there could be no room for day-dreaming of any kind, however romantic it might seem. Even then, his insistence upon the indivisibility of the Muslim community and the Islamic world gave a great impetus to pan-Islamic ideas already so dominant in the mind of the Muslims of the sub-continent.

His criticism of Western civilization was based upon a knowledge of its basic weaknesses, which led to war after war, and of its growing indifference towards spiritual values, but this seemed to be a godsend to many of those who were opposed to Western education and thought that they had found in Iqbal's criticism of it a vindication of their own attitudes. However, this was not the effect of his writings upon the mind of the community in general, because he did not adopt a static or reactionary attitude towards any problem. He emphasized the need of a reconstruction of religious thought as well in Islam.¹⁸ The full significance of his turning away from nationalism in general was lost because it was understood only in its pan-Islamic context; the real meaning of his abstention from any references to Indian nationalism was not fully grasped by the Muslim community at this stage. However, Iqbal did give some shape and substance to the feelings of the Muslim community which otherwise were in danger of becoming unreal and divorced from the actualities of the situation. But a poet, however philosophical the content of his song, cannot cure a community of its romanticism. He is not perused for intellectual discipline; he is read for emotional satisfaction.

Thus the emotions of the community were getting more and more involved. Abū-'l-Kalām's writings were emotional and rhetorical; his eloquence aroused feelings which had never been fully dormant in the heart of the community. His writings once again gave confidence to the Muslims, who liked to be told that they had a great past and could create a greater

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11: In action let faith's potency be tried,
That it may guide thee to thy secret powers . . .

¹⁸ Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, *passim*.



future and who deeply appreciated that their innermost convictions were confirmed by the most moving rhetoric and even some convincing logic. Shibli had likewise appealed in a subtle manner to their emotions. Syed Ahmed Khan's logic had been convincing, but when he had pointed out their backwardness and helpless plight, he had not flattered them. It is a common weakness of nations and communities that they like to be flattered rather than criticized. However necessary the declarations of loyalty to their rulers may have been, they could never have been elevating. It is humiliating for a people to have to accept the superiority of another nation and to affirm its loyalty to it. It inflicts injuries of a deep nature upon the soul of the ruled, especially if their pride is not dead. Those who started the reaction against Syed Ahmed Khan helped the community in recapturing its pride. The benefits of the new education, however limited in its scope and barren in its intellectual productivity, were yet too palpable economically and otherwise to be discarded because of the ridicule heaped upon it; for an impoverished people the lure of government employment was too great to be resisted; but these did not provide that emotional elation that the community needed to escape from its sense of humiliation and frustration. This was provided by those who revolted from the unadulterated realism of Syed Ahmed Khan; in their spiritual and emotional attachments the community followed their lead. Such a nice balance between mundane interests and spiritual leanings cannot last forever; any external stimulus will upset it.

This stimulus was provided for several years by the Balkan Wars, the Italian seizure of Libya and the First World War. The gradual dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the strangulation of Iran could not but create the deepest distress in the Muslim community of the subcontinent, nurtured as it had been for so long upon the ideals of pan-Islamism. The only escape from their sense of frustration arising from their bondage and difficulties of adjustment to a hostile and unpleasant environment had been the feeling that they were merely a part of the greater community of Islam which spread over other portions of the world and which in



some places was more fortunately placed because it was independent and constituted the majority. They were not fully aware of the forces of disintegration working inside that community itself, but they could see with their own eyes the havoc that Western imperialism wrought in Muslim lands. The last citadel of Muslim political power was the Ottoman Empire, which was now beleaguered by its enemies. When Turkey joined the Central Powers in the First World War, the Muslims felt greatly agitated; Muslim sentiment was strongly pro-Turkish, therefore the sympathies of the intelligentsia were entirely with Germany. A leading British newspaper of Upper India suggested that Indian public opinion was pro-German which was not entirely untrue, even though the sympathies with the Central Powers were expressed secretly in private conversation so as to keep on the right side of the law.¹⁹ Mohamed Ali wrote his famous article "The Choice of the Turks" in his review, *The Comrade*, in which he advised the British to conciliate the Turks by accommodating them in the matter of Egypt. This article, however, brought upon him the wrath of the government with the result that he was incarcerated and he lost both his press and his review.²⁰ The same happened to Abū-'l-Kalām.

It is necessary now to introduce Mohamed Ali, who played a leading rôle in the affairs of the community for more than a decade. He was born at Rampur in 1878.²¹ He soon lost his father and was brought up and educated by his mother, who,

¹⁹ *The Pioneer*, Allahabad, 10 September 1914. The Indian Press protested, e.g., *Al-Hilāl*, 16 September 1914, pp. 221, 222. Surely *Al-Hilāl* had not changed so radically overnight; it had been pro-Turk and anti-British until the war made it impossible for Abū-'l-Kalām to express his opinions openly. All activities, however, were not legal. "About the 28th of December 1914 letters were intercepted from one Kasim Mansur, a Gujerathi Muhammadan of Singapore, to his son in Rangoon. One of these letters forwarded an appeal to the Turkish Consul, Ahmad Mullah Daud, from the Malay States Guides, one of the two regiments in Singapore, informing him that the regiment was prepared to mutiny against the British Government and fight for the Turks. . . . Information of this correspondence was given to the authorities in time to enable them to transfer the Malay States Guides to another place before any mutiny occurred." (*Sedition Committee Report*, p. 70.) For other activities of the Muslim members of the Ghadr Party in the subcontinent see *ibid.*, pp. 170 ff.

²⁰ Mohamed Ali, *My Life, A Fragment*, pp. 62, 63. The correct transliteration should have been Muḥammad 'Alī; but he himself used the form Mohamed Ali; this is how it appeared in *The Comrade*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.



in spite of the surrounding conservatism and prejudice against the new schools which taught English, sent her boy to them for education.²² Mohamed Ali proved to be an intelligent student and soon gave promise of an unusual brilliance. He went up to Aligarh and then to Oxford from where he was graduated. He had intended to join the coveted Indian Civil Service, but he was not able to enter it "thanks to an English spring, and a young man's more or less foolish fancy".²³ He entered the service first of Rampur and then of Baroda. Here he proved to be a capable officer and the enlightened ruler appreciated his services; but Mohamed Ali had other ambitions and he set himself up as a journalist. Even before the first issue of his well-known review, *The Comrade*, was out, he had received pressing and tempting offers from other states and the Gaekwad of Baroda was unwilling to accept his resignation; but Mohamed Ali resisted all temptations and devoted himself to his review. It was not commercially so lucrative nor did it offer to him the comfort and security of a good post in a state, but he had chosen to be a journalist after mature deliberation, because this seemed to him to be the only way in which he could assist his community "in taking its proper share in the political life of the country".²⁴

Mohamed Ali presented in his views the synthesis of the various trends in the thought of the Muslim community at that time. Having himself benefited from the new education, he was conscious of the rôle it could play in enabling the community to face its problems. He valued the work of Syed Ahmed Khan, for whom he had a genuine admiration.²⁵ This, however, did not prevent him from understanding its limitations; nor, for that matter, was he unaware of the limitations of science, to which Syed Ahmed Khan paid so undiluted a homage. He fully realized the need of political freedom; with the perpetuation of foreign rule he would have no truck; he must, therefore, seek an honourable arrangement with the Hindus, without which freedom from foreign rule was impossible; this compromise, however, must guarantee the rights of

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.



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his community to save them from another bondage, this time to their own compatriots. He thought of the Muslim community in the subcontinent as a denizen of two worlds; it belonged to its physical habitat and could not forego either the duties or the rights stemming from this; it also was a part of the world community of Islam to which also it had its obligations and duties. He was not prepared to lose the identity of the Muslim community of the subcontinent in the nascent Indian nation. "The lines of cleavage", he wrote, "were too deeply marked to permit a unity other than federal"; by this he did not mean a territorial federation, but a federation of communities.²⁶ *The Comrade* was founded "to voice these views, and prepare the Musalmans to make their proper contribution to territorial patriotism without abating a jot of the fervour of their extra-territorial sympathies, which are the quintessence of Islam".²⁷ The difficulties inherent in the achievement of such a goal and in the pursuit of a pan-Islamic policy while being members of a state which was to be predominantly non-Muslim do not seem to have daunted him in spite of the suspicion in which the extra-territorial sympathies of the Muslims were held in many patriotic Hindu circles.

The Comrade made its first bow in 1911. It soon discovered that it was not easy to pursue the policies it had defined for itself, because they clashed with so many interests. In 1911 the Partition of Bengal was revoked; this was a rude shock to the loyal section of the community because its support had been secured by the consideration that the Muslims were in a majority in the province of East Bengal and Assam which had been brought into existence as the result of the measure. This was not all; East Bengal had been formerly neglected; only as the result of the Partition had the rural population of that area, which was mainly Muslim, come to enjoy certain benefits and the intelligentsia had just started reaping the advantages of freedom from the stranglehold of Calcutta.²⁸ The British

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁷ *Ibid.* A Hindu leader, Bipin Chandra Pal, later said: "Pan Islam is a distinct challenge to every non-Muslim state authority holding sway over any Muslim population. It is a standing menace to the peace of every people composed partly of non-Muslim and partly of Muslim populations" (*Mohammad Ali, His Life, Services and Trial*, p. 56).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.



government had yielded to the agitation of the Hindus, thus showing the way to the Muslims, who felt they could no longer rely upon the support of the British. The criticism of the revocation made Mohamed Ali unpopular both with the British and the Hindus.

This was but a foretaste of the difficulties which lay ahead. The Italian seizure of Libya, the establishment of the French protectorate over Morocco and the attack upon Turkey by the Balkan allies, which took place in 1912, deeply moved the Muslims and the British also came in for considerable criticism because of their attitude. This did not please the Indian government officials. Mohamed Ali's elder brother, Shaukat Ali, in cooperation with a leading theologian, Mawlānā 'Abd-u'l Bārī, founded in 1913 the Anjuman Khuddām-i-Ka'bah, whose real aim was to unite the Muslims in their determination to save the sanctuaries of Islam, Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem from falling into the hands of non-Muslims and to make all sacrifices to attain that purpose if occasion arose.²⁹ It also undertook to help the Muslim pilgrims to the Hijāz whose welfare was sadly neglected in the Indian ports and the ships which transported them. This brought Shaukat Ali into public life too, and resulted in the two brothers ultimately working as a team and being collectively referred to as the Ali Brothers. In the same year the demolition of a portion of a mosque in Cawnpore created great agitation among the Muslims; some enthusiastic Muslims went, against the official orders, to repair the demolished portion, which led to the military firing upon them, further exasperating Muslim opinion. Mohamed Ali made attempts to get redress in India, but he did not succeed. He then went to England and, by pleading before leaders of public opinion, was able to soften the attitude of the government.³⁰ In 1914 began the First World War, when he wrote "The Choice of the Turks" with the consequences which have been mentioned. The Ali Brothers were released towards the end of December 1919; they went to Amritsar where the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the recently organized Khilafat Conference were holding their annual meetings; the Khilafat Conference was presided over by Shaukat

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-53.

³⁰ Ja'fari, pp. 278-281.



Ali. Mohamed Ali was chosen to lead a deputation to Europe to acquaint the victors, specially the British, with the point of view of the Muslims.

These were the beginnings of the Khilafat Movement. The word *khilāfat* comes from *khaliṭfan*, the original of the English word caliph which has been made famous by the Arabian Nights.³¹ The Arabic word means one who comes after, a successor, and, after the death of the Prophet, Abū Bakr, who was selected as the head of the Muslim community, had adopted the title of *khaliṭfatu-rasūl-i'llah*, successor to the Prophet of God. 'Umar, who succeeded him added another "successor to" to the title, emphasizing that he had succeeded the successor to the Prophet and not directly the Prophet, but this method was found to be too cumbersome and was given up in favour of the simpler *khaliṭfah*. The Prophet had two capacities among his followers; he was the inspired messenger of God who had brought them the new inspiration; he was also the head of the community that his teachings had founded. The Prophetic mission came to an end with his death, but the community still needed a head who would order its affairs. The Muslim community is, ideally, an association of believers organized for the purpose of leading their lives in accordance with the teachings of their faith. The community has no church and no sacerdotal order; it is an organization of laymen for ordering their affairs. As the social order cannot be maintained without government, the development and maintenance of an Islamic society without a state was inconceivable from the theological point of view, hence the election of a *khaliṭfah* was considered a canonical necessity. The Muslim jurists have written a good deal about the *khilāfat*. In the beginning it was considered necessary that the entire Muslim community should form a single polity, but later events shattered such a possibility and the *khilāfat* gradually sank into an effete political institution.

By the time of the establishment of the Mughul Empire the idea of a central *khilāfat* had been given up in the subcontinent.³² Tipū Sulṭān sought and obtained recognition from

³¹ The best work in English on this question is Arnold, *The Caliphate*.

³² Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli*, pp. 38, 39.



the Ottomans in their capacity as caliphs; but this was an isolated exception.³³ Tipū Sultān was guided in this by the fact that he had no place in the Mughul hierarchy, because the hostility of the Nizam stood in his way. In the subcontinent, legal authority could at that time be obtained only from the Mughul court. As pious Muslims were averse to giving their total allegiance to a person who had no legal sanction for his authority, Tipū had considered it necessary to obtain letters patent from the sultan of Turkey. The situation changed after the dethronement of the last Mughul emperor, because the Muslims ceased to have even a *de jure* monarch. Thoughts then turned towards Constantinople, but there was no widespread acceptance of the Ottoman caliphate. The *khutbah*, the official sermon in the congregational prayers of Fridays, and the two 'Ids after the end of the Mughul dynasty left out the name of any monarch, which it had been usual to include so long as a Muslim monarch sat on the throne. Indeed one of the most important insignia of royalty had been the inclusion of the monarch's name in the *khutbah*, which was mentioned as a part of the prayer for the well-being of the community.³⁴

Gradually the name of the sultan of Turkey came to be included in the *khutbah* throughout the subcontinent as the caliph and the ruler of all the Muslims of the world. It is nowhere on record how this was achieved and who was behind the movement, but it seems to have started in the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century. It is not unlikely that the movement spread spontaneously through popular enthusiasm once having been started by a few important mosques. At a time when the sultan was at war with the British king and emperor of India, the sultan was being acclaimed as the sovereign in many mosques of the subcontinent. Either the government remained unaware of the situation or considered it politic to shut its eyes to it. The fate of Turkey thus came to have religious import for the Muslims of the subcontinent. The exact nature of the institution of the *khilāfat* was not fully understood in Europe. As the sultan had no political authority

³³ Qureshi, "The purpose of Tipu Sultan's Embassy to Constantinople", *Journal of Indian History*, 1945, pp. 79 ff.

³⁴ Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, p. 74.



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over the subcontinent and many other areas where he was recognized as the caliph, a misunderstanding arose in the minds of many that he was the Muslim counterpart of a pope. This was not correct, because the caliph had no sacerdotal authority; he was originally the ruler of the territories of Islam and his authority had not extended in the palmy days of Islam to any area beyond his actual territorial jurisdiction as a ruler. Even when the caliphs had been reduced to mere shadows, before the assumption of the caliphate by the Ottoman sultans, their name was mentioned in the *khutbah* only in the areas which owed political allegiance to them. The allegiance of the Muslim subjects of non-Muslim states to a caliph who was not their temporal ruler was a new development in Islamic belief. There can, however, be little doubt about its sincerity.

The Arabs, when they revolted against the Turks, had no qualms in their mind; they were deterred neither by their allegiance to the sultan as their caliph, nor by any notions of Islamic brotherhood. The Muslims of the subcontinent were puzzled by the preference of the Arabs for non-Muslim tutelage against the rule of their fellow Muslim caliph. They felt that a constitutional redress of their grievances resulting in some kind of autonomy would have been the better solution. Unlike the Arabs, the Muslims of the subcontinent felt that weak as the Ottoman Empire had grown, it yet offered the promise of being converted into a Muslim federation which could afford protection to a large portion of the Muslim races still under its rule. Whatever might have been the popular attitude, the Muslim intelligentsia was more concerned about the dismemberment of a Muslim state than the theological difficulties that might arise from the disappearance of the *khilāfat*.

The Indian government was fully aware of the sentiments of the Muslims and was not unsympathetic to those feelings. It supported the case put forward by the Muslims of the subcontinent; indeed even before the war came to an end, at the suggestion of the Indian government, the British prime minister, Lloyd George, to soothe the feelings of the Indian Muslims, made a statement in Parliament that it was not the intention of the British government to deprive the Turks of their home-



lands where they were in the majority.³⁵ It was, therefore, only natural that the Muslims should take the step of sending a delegation to Europe to put their case before the arbiters of the destinies of nations and to remind the British government of its promises.

Sad disappointment was, however, in store for them. The Treaty of Sèvres, imposed upon the Turks in 1920, "liquidated the Ottoman Empire and virtually abolished Turkish sovereignty".³⁶ Not only were all non-Turkish areas taken away, but some of the predominantly Turkish territories like Smyrna and parts of Thrace and Anatolia were also to be given to others. The Allies had such contradictory commitments that they could not keep their word either with friend or foe. Besides, the arguments of the Indian Muslim delegation could not create much impression upon the Allies, when there were Arabs clamouring at their doors demanding chunks of the carcass as their reward for helping the Allied cause with their revolt. The Treaty of Sevres, however, inflamed Muslim sentiment in the subcontinent to an unprecedented degree. All the pent-up feelings now found an outlet in a movement which did more to shake the foundations of the British Empire in the subcontinent than any other agitation that had preceded it. The Muslims joined the movement with such abandon and such supreme indifference to suffering or hardship that those who had thought that the Muslim community was incapable of this kind of effort were surprised.

The end of the war had created discontent on another issue as well. Many British circles had expressed the view that, as the reward for their loyalty during the war, the Indians would have to be taken into greater partnership in the government of their country. With the end of the hostilities in sight, many Indian political leaders thought that the time had come to press their demand for self-government. This agitation assumed some proportions, though it still did not go beyond a few

³⁵ Lloyd George stated in Parliament: "Nor are we fighting to deprive Turkey of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race" (quoted in Sitaramayya, I, p. 189).

³⁶ *Columbia Encyclopedia*, article on the "Treaty of Sevres".



meetings of the educated classes in the main towns.³⁷ Soon after the conclusion of the Armistice the Indian government, however, made the mistake of enacting the Rowlatt Act which provided for imprisonment without trial of persons suspected of terrorist activities.³⁸ The Bill was passed in the teeth of Indian opposition in March 1919. Gandhi had by now come into considerable prominence. He had threatened that if the proposals which had originally been embodied in a report were enacted he would lead a campaign of *satyāgraha*, passive resistance for a just cause.³⁹ He had toured the subcontinent extensively and had created a considerable following for himself. The passage of the Rowlatt Act had already inflamed feelings when the government made another mistake. The Indian National Congress was to meet at Amritsar; the authorities arrested the two leading workers who were making the arrangements and took them away to some unknown place.⁴⁰ When the news spread, a crowd collected and marched in the direction of the area where government offices and the residences of the officers were located. They were stopped by military pickets, whereupon the crowd threw brickbats at the soldiers. They fired upon the crowd, killing one or two and injuring others. The crowd turned back, taking the victims of the firing in a procession, and on the way set fire to several buildings and killed five Europeans.⁴¹ There was similar rioting of varying intensity in other localities.⁴² Gandhi withdrew the *satyāgraha*.⁴³

A serious tragedy took place at Amritsar. In the centre of the city there is an open space, the Jallianwala Bagh, surrounded by tall houses, the walls of which form an unbroken high enclosure. There is just one narrow entrance. A large meeting was held there on 13 April 1919. Though meetings had

³⁷ This was the agitation organized by Mrs. Annie Besant for home rule. (Sitaramayya, I, pp. 130-132).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160. *Satyāgraha* is a Sanskrit word which was used as a technical term by Gandhi in the sense of passive resistance for the vindication of a just right.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 164.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 171.



been prohibited, martial law had not been imposed. The entrance was occupied by General Dyer who took with him a force of one hundred and fifty soldiers, put them on a platform and ordered them to fire upon the crowd, which had been peaceful. Even according to the general's statement, the crowd did not have sufficient time to disperse. The soldiers had 1,600 rounds of ammunition and the firing stopped only when the ammunition ran out. According to the version of the government, the casualties were 400 dead and between one and two thousand wounded.⁴⁴ The dead and the wounded were left unattended for the entire night. Two days later martial law was proclaimed, not to stop further violence but to inflict humiliating punishments upon the population. One of these was to make every passer-by crawl on the ground, because a European missionary lady had been attacked by the crowd on that spot, though decent citizens of the same area had come to her help and rescued her from any serious molestation.⁴⁵ Martial law was imposed in other places as well and the nature of the punishments inflicted and the restrictions laid upon the activities of the civilian population betray an anxiety to humiliate the people and put them to inconvenience rather than to maintain law and order.⁴⁶ Martial law was not withdrawn until 11 June; in certain areas of strategic importance it continued much longer. At long last the session of the Congress was held at Amritsar. This was the session which was attended by the Ali Brothers after their release.

Hindu and Muslim leaders arrived at an understanding at Amritsar which enabled them to cooperate with one another in organising a mass movement against the British.⁴⁷ Gandhi espoused the cause of the *khilāfat* and the Muslims joined the movement for the liberation of the subcontinent with great enthusiasm. Thus began the all too brief honeymoon between the two communities. The leaders were helped in creating feelings of unity by a series of developments. The Treaty of Sèvres shattered all hopes of securing through deputations

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 165.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 165 ff.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 189.



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and representations satisfactory terms for the Turks; the Hunter Commission which had been appointed to inquire into the excesses under martial law submitted its report, which was not unanimous, the Indian and British members being divided on all important issues; the new reforms under the Government of India Act of 1919 were disappointing and did not come up to Indian expectations.⁴⁸ There were other causes of discontent as well which were not visible on the surface. A large number of soldiers was demobilised; they had seen European countries and their standard of living; now they were unemployed and had to share the grinding poverty of the peasants. In certain areas, the methods of obtaining recruits and loans had left a legacy of resentment against the government. The demobilized soldiers were particularly resentful, because they thought that they had helped the government when it was in difficulties and now they were left without adequate provision for making a decent living. In short many factors united to make the government unpopular and the communities forgot for the time being their own differences in their common dislike of the government.

The Muslims first started the ill-advised movement of *hijrat*.⁴⁹ They said that they could not be loyal to a government which had betrayed them so greatly; as they were in no position to turn out the foreign rulers, there was only one thing which they could do with honour, and that was to leave the territories of the rulers with whom they had severed their ties of loyalty. This was also in keeping with the Islamic injunction that if a Muslim finds himself helpless against iniquity and cannot resist it, he should migrate to a place where he is not faced with the same problem. It was absurd to apply the doctrine of *hijrat* to such a situation; the Muslims of the subcontinent were too numerous for such an undertaking. About 18,000 people

⁴⁸ The Congress had expressed its dissatisfaction with the proposed reforms at its special session held on 29 August 1918 at Bombay (*ibid.*, p. 153) and at the annual session held at Delhi on 26 December 1918 (*ibid.*, pp. 157, 158). The majority report of the Hunter Commission was condemned at the special session held at Calcutta in September 1920 (*ibid.*, pp. 201, 202); the reference to the *khilāfat* question was contained in the famous non-cooperation resolution passed in the same session (*ibid.*, p. 202).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.



found their way to Afghanistan, where they were far from welcome. The movement could not succeed; it was incapable of producing any constructive results; it only caused hardship to those ardent and sincere persons who responded to such a call.

A scheme of non-cooperation with the government was drawn up and was formally inaugurated on 1 August 1920. The scheme advised the people to surrender all titles and honorary offices conferred by the government, to refuse to attend official and semi-official functions organized by the government; it recommended the gradual withdrawal of students from institutions maintained or aided by the government, and the boycott of British courts, of legislative councils, of elections to these councils and of foreign goods; it advocated refusal to enlist for service in Iraq. The resolution was adopted by a special session of the Congress.⁵⁰ It is obvious that such a programme was the outcome of Gandhi's mind, but it was also incorporated in a ruling of a large number of Muslim theologians; this ruling was badly drafted and did not take into account several contingencies that were likely to arise in the course of the movement.⁵¹ One of the by-products of the movement was the participation of the theologians in the politics of the community. The boycott of government and government-aided institutions released a large number of students for work as volunteers to further the interests of the movement. This created the tradition of the participation of students in active politics which continues to exist and throw its sinister shadow upon academic life in the entire subcontinent. Another offshoot of the movement was a concerted

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁵¹ Manglori claims that "the programme of non-cooperation based upon the *shar'* was first put forward by Abū-'l-Kalām Azād in January 1920 in Calcutta while presiding over a provincial conference". This is not borne out by facts. The All India Khilafat Conference "held at Delhi in November 1919 had resolved to withdraw cooperation from Government under Gandhi's advice—a decision which was reaffirmed by Muslim meetings in Calcutta and elsewhere, as well as by the Madras Khilaphat Conference on 17-4-1920 . . ." (Sitaramayya, I, p. 198). The Muslim divines issued a *fatwā* (a religious ruling) in a session of the Jam'iyat-u'l-'ulamā held at Delhi from 19 to 21 November 1920. The theologians committed the mistake of giving an almost permanent ruling, whereas political programmes are never permanent. It was signed by five hundred persons and was proscribed by the Government (Manglori, pp. 528, 529).



attack upon Aligarh to get it disaffiliated; this move, however, did not succeed because of the determined stand taken by the authorities of that institution.

The Non-Cooperation Movement became popular and large numbers responded to the call of the leaders. The first setback came when, after an interview with the viceroy, Lord Reading, Gandhi persuaded the Ali Brothers to issue a statement that they were fully wedded to the doctrine of non-violence and had never intended to create a contrary impression.⁵² There was nothing intrinsically wrong in such a statement, but because it was issued in pursuance of a suggestion of the viceroy, it was acclaimed in official circles as an apology by the Ali Brothers. Actually the Ali Brothers had been reluctant to issue the statement and were persuaded to do so because Gandhi was most anxious that his movement should not be associated with violence. Soon after, however, the Ali Brothers were arrested and prosecuted at Karachi for having made a speech in support of a resolution passed by the Khilafat Conference in that city calling upon the Muslim personnel of the British Indian armies to give up the service of a government under which they had to fight against fellow Muslims in other countries.⁵³ The main charge of conspiracy failed, but the Ali Brothers, along with several others, were sentenced to imprisonment for two years. Early next year, in February 1922, a Congress procession chased twenty-one policemen and a sub-inspector into the police station at Chauri Chaura and set fire to it; the policemen, all Indians, perished in the flames.⁵⁴ There had been violence elsewhere as well and there were signs that the movement might get out of control. Therefore, at the instance of Gandhi, the Working Committee of the Congress passed a resolution at Bardoli on 12 February 1922 suspending the mass civil disobedience movement and advocating a programme of constructive work.⁵⁵ Gandhi was arrested on 13 March and after a trial sentenced to imprisonment for six years.

⁵² For the circumstances under which the statement was issued, see Sitaramayya, I, pp. 213, 214.

⁵³ Mohamed Ali, *My Life, A Fragment*, pp. 151, 152. The conviction took place on 1 November 1921 (Sitaramayya, I, p. 222). The details are available in several tracts, e.g. (*The*) *Historical Trial of Ali Brothers*.

⁵⁴ Sitaramayya, I, p. 235.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.



With the arrest of the leaders, the movement lost its vigour and the minds of the people were diverted into other channels because of various happenings in the subcontinent and abroad.⁵⁶ The Muslims had played a leading rôle in the movement; their sacrifices were out of all proportion to their numbers; they marched cheerfully into the prisons; despite their backwardness in education, they withdrew a substantial number of their children and young men and women from schools and colleges maintained and aided by the government. They even tried to destroy the cherished Aligarh. They established and ran the foremost non-cooperating educational institution, the Jāmi'ah-i-milliyah. And they never put themselves the question whether all these efforts would bring them any reward. They did not even ask the Hindus to give them some idea of the Muslim share in a liberated India. They were stirred by the thought of liberty, but, mainly, the Khilafat Movement was an adventure in altruism undertaken to save their Muslim brethren in other lands from bondage to Europe. Though they did not know it at the time, the sacrifices paid them rich dividends in teaching them the technique of organizing a mass-movement of large proportions, in restoring their self-confidence when they had almost lost it, and in creating among them political awakening. After the Khilafat Movement the Muslim politicians of the subcontinent began to speak a different language; they gave up the idea that they could live only on the sufferance of either the Hindus or the British. They now entered the arena as the third party in the contest.

⁵⁶ See *infra* Chapter XIV.



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XIV

The Rise of Muslim Nationalism

The Hindu-Muslim accord did not last very long. The first difficulty came from an unexpected quarter. The Moplahs of Malabar are a warlike people. They responded enthusiastically to the Khilafat Movement; in the beginning they showed remarkable restraint when their leaders were arrested; but later, through the mistakes of the local authorities, they were provoked into open rebellion.¹ The rebellion was crushed, but not until they had given the government plenty of trouble by their guerilla warfare. They were dealt with severely and the Khilafat Committee organized relief for the orphans and the widows of those killed. Having been left leaderless and being mostly ignorant, they were responsible for crimes against some Hindus as well. The reason was that, for them, the most palpable form of freedom after they had established their

¹ Sitaramayya, I, p. 220. On p. 294, the same authority deals with another rebellion, but in a more sympathetic manner. The Muslim version of the Moplah rebellion is contained in the Muslim newspapers in Urdu, especially *The Khilāfat*, Bombay, following the suppression of the rebellion, specially the issues of the earlier part of 1922. Many Moplah prisoners died of heat and suffocation in a crammed train. Also, see Congress Working Committee Resolution (Sitaramayya, p. 216). The Moplah riots, reported with considerable exaggeration in the Hindu press, had grave reactions upon the Hindu community (*The Comrade*, 9 January 1925 p. 19).

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short-lived government in the area was to release themselves from the clutches of the Hindu money-lenders and landlords, whose tyranny was nearer home than the misdeeds of an impersonal government and high-level diplomacy. Some of these landlords and money-lenders had been treated roughly, but they were able to purchase immunity by a declaration of conversion to Islam. When the Moplahs had been suppressed, the details of their treatment of their Hindu adversaries came to light and caused a natural resentment in the minds of the Hindus. This was by no means the first outbreak of violence between the two communities. According to the British records the first Hindu-Muslim riot took place in 1809 at Benares; since then sometimes sporadically, sometimes for a continuous period, trouble has been breaking out whenever an irritant to communal feeling has cropped up.² Only four years before the Moplah rising, in September 1917, there had been mass attacks upon Muslims in the districts of Arrah and Shahabad in Bihar. In the same month the next year, there was a riot at Kartarpur near Hardwar, in which nineteen Muslims were burnt alive. These riots had not prevented the coming together of the Hindus and the Muslims for political purposes at Amritsar in 1919.

The Moplah excess against the Hindus, however, had a different effect. The Maratha leader, Moonje, thought it advisable to organise the Hindus against the Muslims in 1922. His movement was called *sangathan*, binding together; the purpose was to knit the Hindus into a strong community so that they could render a good account of themselves in case of an emergency. It was obvious to the Muslims that the intention was not to strengthen the Hindu community against the British; indeed the programme followed by the organization could leave no doubt in the mind of any observer that the movement was directed against the Muslims. The Hindus were given training in the use of such weapons as would come in handy in communal rioting, like sticks, brickbats, and the Indian version of jiu-jitsu. Simultaneously there was inaugurated an economic boycott of Muslim shopkeepers, craftsmen and

² For details see the note on "Communal Disorders" in *Indian Statutory Commission Report*, pp. 96-97.



artisans. Soon after the incident at Chauri Chaura, an Ārya Samājist leader, Shraddhananda, having been released from prison, started a movement for the mass conversion of the Malkānā Rājputs.³ When the Hindu-Muslim amity had started, he had been taken in procession to the Jāmi‘Masjid of Delhi and given the unusual honour of being asked to ascend the pulpit for speaking to the Muslims assembled there. The Malkānās were ignorant and had, in spite of their conversion to Islam a few centuries back, adhered to some of their Hindu notions and customs. They were an easy prey, not so much for religious reasons as because of their Rājput pride and social pressure. The movement was called *shuddhi*, meaning purification. The two movements caused grave misgivings in the

³ The Malkānās lived mostly in the western areas of the United Provinces and eastern parts of Rajputana. There is no good account available of the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* Movements; the references are scattered over many issues of the Urdu and Hindi Press of the period; among the Hindu papers the leading sources are *The Arjuna*, Delhi (in Hindi), *The Tej*, Delhi (which carried signed articles by Shraddhananda, the founder of the *Shuddhi* Movement), *The Milāp*, Lahore, and *The Pratāp*, Lahore, which represented the Hindu Mahāsabhā and Ārya Samājist points of view. The Muslim point of view was represented in these matters by *Al-Amān*, Delhi, *The Siyāsāt*, Lahore and *The Zamīndār*, Lahore. All the newspapers mentioned here except *The Arjuna* were published in Urdu. Individual references would be too many; these newspapers published something in this connection practically every day. One reference is *The Comrade*, Delhi, 1925, pp. 266, 267. The best single account of the two movements is by Faḍl Ḥusain; for *Sangathan* also see Curran. The following is a representative statement regarding the aims of the two movements: "I declare that the future of the Hindu race of Hindustan and of the Punjab rests on these four pillars: (i) Hindu Sangathan, (ii) Hindu Raj, (iii) Shuddhi of Muslims, (iv) and conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and the frontiers. So long as the Hindu nation does not accomplish these four things, the safety of our children and great-grandchildren will be ever in danger, and the safety of the Hindu race will be impossible. The Hindu race has but one history, and its institutions are homogeneous. But the Mussalmans and Christians are far removed from the confines of Hinduism, for their religions are alien and they love Persian, Arabic and European institutions. Thus just as one removes foreign matter from the eye, Shuddhi must be made of these two religions. Afghanistan and the hilly regions of the frontier were formerly part of India but are at present under the domination of Islam. Just as there is Hindu religion in Nepal, so there must be Hindu institutions in Afghanistan and the frontier territory, otherwise it is useless to win Swarāj. For mountain tribes are always warlike and hungry. If they become our enemies, the age of Nādir Shāh and Zamān Shāh will begin anew. At present English officers are protecting the frontiers, but it cannot always be so. If Hindus want to protect themselves, they must conquer Afghanistan and the frontiers and convert all the mountain tribes" (Har Dayal, quoted by M.R.T., pp. 2, 3). Thus the programme was to exterminate Islam from the subcontinent and Afghanistan; if this could not be achieved, even *swarāj* (independence) was not worth-while. See also Curran and R.S.S.



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mind of the Muslims because they came from old Congressmen; the whole edifice of Hindu-Muslim unity seemed to crumble. The Muslims replied by two counter movements, *tanzim*, or organization, to meet the threat of *sangathan*, and *tabligh*, or missionary effort, to resist *shuddhi*. As Muslim resources were meagre compared to the resources of the Hindus, the Muslim counter-movements were not much of a success.

These facts so baldly stated do not convey a real notion of the feelings that were aroused. Any movement for preparation against another community must paint its opponents in lurid colours. All instances of individual misbehaviour were played up by the communal press, blaming the entire community for the misdeed. The Hindu press in particular began to paint the Muslims as abductors of women; even Muslim women were depicted as the agents of abductors. Feelings ran high; those who took to physical exercise in response to the appeals of the leaders of the *Sangathan* Movement soon became impatient to prove their prowess; therefore, riots were provoked and there followed a crop of serious communal disturbances.⁴ A civil strife had thus taken the place of a common movement for liberation; the peaceful and law-abiding citizen had once again to look to the foreign government for protection and security.

This was the atmosphere which confronted the Ali Brothers when they were released towards the end of 1923 after serving their terms. In the beginning they were angry with those of their Muslim co-workers who had succumbed to the temptation of organizing counter-measures against the Hindu communal movements.⁵ They remained loyal to the Congress and Gandhi, but gradually they were disillusioned. It is necessary to mention the main events which led to their estrangement, because they also explain the Muslim revolt against the Congress. Mohamed Ali participated in the special session of the Congress at Delhi in September 1923 and presided over the annual session held the same year at Cocanada. Here he

⁴ It was during these riots, in 1926, that the secret Hindu militant organization, the *Rāshtriya Svayam Sevak Sangha*, generally called RSS, came into existence. It remained underground and came out into the open only two or three years before Independence. The pre-Independence newspapers all carry many references to its activities.

⁵ Ja'fari, pp. 411 ff.

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said to his community, in his presidential address to the Congress: "You have no alternative better than non-cooperation with the foreigner and cooperation with our neighbours..."⁶ Gandhi fell seriously ill in the beginning of 1924 and had to be released.⁷ The communal situation grew worse and there were riots in widely scattered places in the subcontinent. The Hindus, being a minority in Kohat in the North-Western Frontier Province, suffered badly in a riot which took place there. Gandhi was profoundly moved and undertook a fast of twenty-one days "to expiate his own guilt".⁸ This created anxiety among congressmen and a unity conference was summoned at Delhi which failed to achieve much beyond drawing up a list of fundamental rights on issues which were often the pretext for rioting, like cow slaughter and the playing of music before mosques at the time of prayers.⁹

The Kohat riots had another serious result. A committee of two, namely Gandhi and Shaukat Ali, was appointed by the Congress to investigate the riots. They were not able to agree in their findings; Gandhi thought that there had been no provocation on the part of the Hindus; Shaukat Ali was of the opinion that the Hindus had provoked the riots.¹⁰ In a meeting of the Panjab Khilafat Conference held soon after, Mohamed Ali suggested that it would be better if leaders, instead of condemning the other community, warned their own community to refrain from violence and mischief.¹¹ Mohamed Ali went on opposing those of his co-religionists who were taking part in the *tanẓīm* and *tabligh* movements and incurred unpopularity.¹² He, however, expected the Hindu nationalists to be active against the Hindus who had created an atmosphere of hostility; in this hope he was disappointed. The Hindu nationalist leaders refused to censure the Hindu

⁶ *Congress Presidential Addresses* (Madras, 1934), second series, *Mohamed Ali's Presidential Address*, p. 666.

⁷ Sitaramayya, I, p. 267.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *The Tribune*, Lahore, 29 March 1925; *The Comrade*, Delhi, 10 April 1925.

¹¹ *The Comrade*, 1 May 1925, pp. 266, 267.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9 January 1925, p. 20; Ja'fari, pp. 465 ff.



communal movements. On the occasion of the Cawnpore session of the Congress, held in 1925, Mohamed Ali, accompanied by Abū-'l-Kalām and others, had an interview with Gandhi, trying to persuade him to come out actively in favour of restoring inter-communal harmony.¹³ He remained cold to these suggestion. Soon after, he made a strange pronouncement in a public meeting at Calcutta. He said: "...I simply nowadays... content myself by saying that some day or other we Hindus and Muslims will have to come together, if we want the deliverance of our country. And if it is to be our lot that, before we can come together, we shed one another's blood, then I say, the sooner we do so, the better it is for us."¹⁴ In his *Harijan*, he said that a Muslim was a bully and a Hindu a coward and he advised the Hindus to shed their cowardice. This was precisely what the leaders of the *Sangathan* Movement were telling the Hindus all the time. Mohamed Ali now started openly criticising the Hindu communal leaders and thus brought upon his head all the virulence of their press. Even then he advised the Muslims not to retaliate under Hindu provocation or violence. "If they raise their hands, you bow your heads", said he, "if they threaten you with a knife, bare your chest before them."¹⁵ This was a counsel of perfection and the Muslims did not act upon it, but it shows how far Mohamed Ali was willing to go for the maintenance of communal peace.

The situation, however, did not improve. Har Dayal, who had been a revolutionary and was in exile, at this time contributed a series of articles to the Hindu press which found wide publication.¹⁶ It was his thesis that the Muslims had refused

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 469. Later Mohamed Ali expressed his disappointment in the following words: "We who worked for ten years through thick and thin with Gandhiji pressed that upon him, but the desire of retaining Hindu popularity for himself and for Pandit Motilal Nehru... prevented a settlement" (*Indian Round Table Conference*, Minorities Committee, Documents, Minutes, meetings 1-6, p. 4).

¹⁴ Sitaramayya, I, p. 298.

¹⁵ On the eve of his departure for the Hijāz to participate in the Conference to which he was invited by Sulṭān Ibn Sa'ūd (Ja'fari, p. 472).

¹⁶ *The Milāp*, 25 May, 1925; *The Tej*, Krishna number, 1926; *Al-Amān*, 30 August 1926, etc. These views were expressed by several other Hindu leaders as well. Also, *The Comrade*, 5 June 1925; Durrani, pp. 98-100; M.R.T., pp. 2-3.



to identify themselves completely with India in spite of their association with the subcontinent for several centuries. They should now discard all their foreign ways; they should call themselves Hindus; they should adopt Hindu names; they should adopt Hindu festivals; they should venerate the mythical Hindu heroes. They might, if they so desired, follow such tenets of their religion as would not stand in the way of their complete identification with their habitat and form a sect of Hinduism, calling themselves Muḥammadi Hindus. Har Dayal was, by no means, alone in entertaining such ideas; this would be apparent from the fact that his views were published so widely with approval by several newspapers. Another Hindu leader, Lajpat Rai, was not so sanguine about being able to absorb the Muslims; he came out with the theory that the Muslims could never be united with the Hindus into a single nation.¹⁷ It is rather curious that such a suggestion should first come from a Hindu communal leader; yet there can be little doubt that Lajpat Rai was a man of clear vision. At the time, however, such opinions were unpopular with the Muslims and Har Dayal's articles, in particular, filled the Muslims with serious misgivings about the intentions of the communal Hindus. For them the implementation of Har Dayal's programme would have meant cultural death and religious apostasy; they were resolved to resist such intentions with all their might. Those who still thought that it was necessary to maintain Hindu-Muslim amity at all costs, like Mohamed Ali, were growing fewer every day.¹⁸ The average Muslim thought

¹⁷ See *The Comrade*, 22 May 1925, article under the caption, "The North-Western Frontier and Hindu Fears" and its continuation in the issue of 5 June 1925. Also see Lajpat Rai's letter to C. R. Das reproduced in Ambedkar, p. 274. Mrs. Annie Besant, who was more Hindu than the Hindus themselves, expressed similar views; in her anger she even forgot her theosophical respect for all religions because she criticized Islam quite bitterly (*ibid.*, pp. 272-274). Also compare Savarkar's statement contained in a speech made in 1937: "... the solid fact is that the so called communal questions are but a legacy handed down to us by centuries of a cultural, religious and national antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims... India cannot today be assumed to be a unitarian and homogenous nation but, on the contrary, there are two nations, in the main, the Hindus and the Muslims in India." M.R.T. Savarkar was the president of the Hindu Mahāsabhā.

¹⁸ Of course Mohamed Ali did not like the opinions of leaders like Har Dayal (*The Comrade*, 5 June 1925, p. 347) but he hoped that communal harmony would ultimately prevail. Compare Fremantle, p. 344: "Hindu-Muslim unity was achieved through the Khalifate Movement for what, in the history of their antagonism, is a brief second."



more in terms of self-defence and felt more and more estranged.

The Khilafat Movement received several setbacks from which it was not able to recover. The recovery of the Turks under Mustafa Kamal Pasha was hailed with great joy by the Muslims of the subcontinent. When Smyrna was recovered by the Turks, Muslim houses, buildings and shops were illuminated. When the nationalist forces occupied Constantinople, the sultanate was abolished. In 1924 the caliphate also was abolished. This created considerable consternation among the Muslims of the subcontinent. The Khilafat Committee still concerned itself with agitation for the freedom of peninsular Arabia from non-Muslim dominance and control. This also was a losing battle, because the Western powers were, by now, too strongly entrenched there and they could not be shaken, especially when, in considerable areas, they had the cooperation of the Arab potentates themselves.

The last effort was to try to persuade Sultān Ibn Sa'ūd, who had driven King Ḥusain away from the Ḥijāz, to accept the constitution of a pan-Islamic body to advise him on matters like the *hajj* and the upkeep of the sanctuaries of Islam; this proposal was rejected, because the sultan thought that it would limit his absolute authority.¹⁹ After this there was nothing left for the organization to do. Another blow was that the treasurer had invested the funds without authorization and there were heavy losses which he was not able to meet out of his private means.²⁰ The responsibility was entirely his and no blame attaches to others. This happened while the Ali Brothers were in gaol and they had no knowledge of these happenings. However, confidence was shaken in the organization, even though the public was informed as soon as the facts were discovered.

Some Pakistani writers are inclined to be critical of the Khilafat Movement because it was based upon a blind trust of the Hindus: they also argue that the Muslims wasted their energies upon an unattainable purpose; besides all the factors in the situation had not been taken into consideration. They say that the Muslims of the subcontinent were not aware of the

¹⁹ *The Comrade*, 9 January 1925, pp. 20, 21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10 April 1925, pp. 216 ff.



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hostility of the Arabs towards the Turks, nor did they know that the Turks themselves were turning from pan-Islam to nationalism. They point to the folly of trying to wreck Ali-garh. All this is true; it fully represented the romanticism that had fed Muslim emotions for so long; and yet the Khilafat Movement was by no means a total loss. Without the Khilafat Movement the Muslims would not have learnt the techniques of mass movements, nor would the masses have entered the arena of politics which would have left them without any political awakening. Their enthusiasm had brought a new life into political activity in the sub-continent and greatly widened its scope. The Congress also had benefited greatly by supporting the movement. "The effect of its taking up the *khilafat* cause", says Ambedkar, the famous "untouchable" leader, "upon the dimensions of the Congress was tremendous. The Congress was really made great and powerful not by the Hindus but by the Muslims."²¹

The revolt of the extremist Hindus against the Congress and their inauguration of movements directed against the Muslims in 1922-23 was really the result of their dislike of the growing influence of the Muslims in the politics of the subcontinent and of the accession to Muslim strength which the organization and discipline of the Khilafat Movement imparted. It was a revolt of the entire Hindu community; Gandhi and other Congress leaders were either helpless against the united sentiment of their community or unwilling to act against it because they found themselves in sympathy with it.²²

The subsequent policies of the Muslims were not fashioned by the Khilafat Committee; the mantle fell upon the Muslim League either singly or in cooperation with other bodies. It has already been mentioned that it was established in 1906 after the Aga Khan deputation had waited upon Lord Minto. In the beginning it concerned itself mainly with the question of the representation of the Muslims in the local bodies and the services; after 1911 it showed some interest in the problems that were common to all the inhabitants of British India. In 1912

²¹ Ambedkar, quoted by Rajput, p. 53.

²² Gandhi himself said: "I have admitted my incompetence. I have admitted that I have been found wanting as a physician prescribing a cure for this malady" (Sitaramayya, I, p. 298).



it was greatly perturbed at the annulment of the Partition of Bengal; the lesson that the government was more amenable to the pressure of agitation than to expressions of loyalty was not lost upon its members.²³ The next session was attended by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who had hitherto held aloof and had strongly opposed the demands of the Aga Khan deputation; he considered it worth-while to attend, because the League was changing its aims and objects and including the attainment of self-government in them.²⁴ A little later Jinnah was in England where for the first time he was persuaded by Mohamed Ali and Wazir Hasan, who happened to be there, to join the League on the assurance of these two leaders "that loyalty to the Muslim League and the Muslim interests would in no way and at no time imply even the shadow of disloyalty to the larger national cause to which his life was dedicated".²⁵

He played an important rôle in bringing about the famous Congress-League agreement in 1916 known as the Lucknow Pact.²⁶ Under the pact the Congress conceded the principle of separate electorates to which it had been opposed and accepted the principle of their extension to the Panjab and the Central Provinces. The Muslims surrendered their right to vote in the general constituencies in return. They were to get a third of the elected seats in the central legislature, forty per cent in Bengal, fifty per cent in the Panjab, and more than the proportion of their numerical strength in the provinces where they were in a minority. Under the Minto-Morley Reforms they had only 10.4 per cent in Bengal and 25 per cent in the Panjab in spite of their majorities in these provinces. Actually in the Panjab the Muslims had neither separate electorates nor reservation of seats.²⁷ This was an improvement upon their previous position, but the Muslims were soon to discover that it was a mistake to permit themselves to be converted into minorities where they formed the majority of the population.

²³ Presidential Address of the Nawab of Dacca at the sixth session of the All India Muslim League, quoted by Symonds, p. 42.

²⁴ Bolitho, p. 51.

²⁵ Naidu, p. 11.

²⁶ For details of the pact see A. C. Banerjee, *Indian Constitutional Documents*, II, pp. 289-295. Also Coupland, I, pp. 48-49.

²⁷ *Indian Statutory Commission Report*, IV, pp. 138, 139.



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For the next few years the League held its sessions along with the Congress, and in accordance with the general sentiments of the Muslims, there was great cooperation between the two bodies.²⁸ Then, as has been seen, with the collapse of the Non-Cooperation Movement, Hindu-Muslim relations deteriorated rapidly. This was reflected in the relations between the Congress and the League as well; they ceased to meet at the same place and time.

The appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927 to examine the question of further political reforms was resented in the political circles because it contained no Indian member. Practically all parties including the Muslim League decided to boycott the Commission.²⁹ The Muslim League also accepted certain proposals regarding the future constitution mainly through the efforts of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. These envisaged reservation of seats for the Muslims in such a manner that their majority should not be reduced into a minority in any province where they outnumbered other communities and would give them weightage in the provinces where they formed minorities. They also demanded that the North-Western Frontier Province should be brought to the level of other provinces in political status and that Sind and Baluchistan should be constituted separate provinces. At the centre they demanded reservation of thirty per cent of the seats.

Lord Birkenhead, the British secretary of state for India, had challenged the Indians to produce a constitution instead of always criticising the reforms introduced by the British.³⁰ This challenge was taken up in earnest and an All-Parties Conference met at Delhi in February 1928. At once Hindu-Muslim differences came to the forefront; it was thought that a small committee might achieve what the conference would find difficult to perform, hence a committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru "to consider and determine the principles of the constitution of India". The

²⁸ The sessions were held simultaneously and at the same place from 1915 to 1922; *The Comrade*, 9 January 1925, p. 19.

²⁹ Coupland, I, pp. 98, 99.

³⁰ Bolitho, p. 93.



Committee produced principles that would give a constitution based on the model of a British self-governing dominion. Its recommendations on the question of the position of Muslims in a self-governing India were that the constitution should include a declaration of rights; the North-Western Frontier Province should acquire the same status as other provinces and Sind should be separated; the Muslims should have reservation of seats only at the centre and in the provinces where they were in a majority; no weightage should be allowed; the principle of separate electorates should be given up. Regarding the form of government it did not lay sufficient emphasis upon federation.³¹

The report was considered by the All-Parties Conference in its Lucknow session in August where some amendments were proposed; hence the committee was asked to revise the report.³² The revised version made two changes that were of significance to the Muslims. It recommended that Baluchistan also should be raised to the status of a province and the system of communal representation should be re-examined after ten years. This did not allay the misgivings that had been caused in the Muslim mind by the publication of the original version. A Muslim All-Parties Conference was convened at Delhi to deliberate upon the proposals and it issued a manifesto after adopting it unanimously on 1 January 1929.³³ The conference expressed the view that the size and ethnological and linguistic character of the subcontinent made it necessary that it should have a federal form of government with complete autonomy and residuary powers vested in the constituent states. The conference refused to give up separate electorates or weightage and demanded safeguards for protection and promotion of Muslim education, religion and personal law. It also demanded proper representation in the central and provincial cabinets, in the civil services and on all statutory self-governing bodies. The two main reasons for rejecting the Nehru Report were that the Muslims were now determined that the provinces

³¹ All-Parties Conference, 1928: *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the principles of the Constitution of India.*

³² The revised proposals are contained in All-Parties Conference, 1928: *Supplementary Report of the Committee*, pp. 31-51.

³³ Coupland, I, p. 96.



in which they were in a majority must have the fullest autonomy and that they must maintain the separate electorates.³⁴

The Simon Commission submitted its report in 1930; the advance recommended was so meagre and was based on such patent scepticism about the success of parliamentary institutions in the subcontinent that Indian public opinion could not be friendly to it.³⁵ The Congress decided to launch a civil disobedience movement.³⁶ The Muslim nationalist, Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, advised Gandhi that the Congress should arrive at some agreement with the Muslims but his suggestion was brushed aside at the instance of Jawaharlal Nehru, who said that India could not wait for the Muslims.³⁷ The reaction of the Congress leaders was based upon realism, because they were conscious of the rift between the Congress and the large majority of the Muslims. Any hopes of a *rapprochement* would have been unrealistic. The government did not have much difficulty in suppressing the movement. The Working Committee of the Congress was declared an illegal body, Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and several other leaders were arrested.³⁸ By the end of 1931 the gaols were full, having no less than sixty thousand prisoners. The Muslims mostly stood aside. The All-India Muslim Conference met at Bombay in April to define the Muslim attitude under the presidentship of Mohamed Ali who represented the feelings of the community when he said in his address that while the Muslims were opposed to British domination, they were equally opposed to Hindu domination.³⁹ Mohamed Ali thought that Gandhi's movement would lead to the Muslims becoming dependents of the Hindu Mahāsabhā. The tension between the communities had not decreased when the civil disobedience movement was started and spasmodic rioting had continued.

³⁴ The text appears in *Simon Commission Report*, II, pp. 84, 85.

³⁵ Coupland, I, pp. 102, 103.

³⁶ Sitaramayya, I, pp. 368 ff.

³⁷ It is impossible to document this. I have not been able to find a reference because the talks were secret. My source of information was Dr. Ansari. With all my anxiety to refrain from basing anything, so far as documentation is concerned, on my personal knowledge, I have had to make one or two exceptions.

³⁸ The movement is described in detail in Sitaramayya, I, pp. 362 ff.

³⁹ *Times of India*, Bombay, 24 April 1930.



Indian opinion demanded an opportunity for the representatives of India to sit in conference with the British to discuss the constitutional issue. The Labour Party which had always been sympathetic to the Congress came into power in 1929 and it wanted to make a gesture. The government, therefore, decided to convene a Round Table Conference to bring together the representatives of Indian opinion with representatives of the three British parties, Labour, Liberals and Conservatives.⁴⁰ The first meeting of the Conference was held in London on 12 November 1930. From India the representatives of all the groups attended; the Congress, however, non-cooperated. The British Indian delegation had a Muslim wing; its most prominent members were Aga Khan III, Mohamed Ali and Mohammed Ali Jinnah. A certain amount of agreement emerged in the first session; it was accepted that the most suitable form of government would be a federation embracing the provinces of British India and the princely states; the introduction of fully responsible government in the provinces with representation of minority interests in the cabinet, the separation of Sind and the introduction of responsible government were agreed upon in principle; Moonje of the Hindu Mahāsabhā dissented on the separation of Sind.⁴¹

The question of minorities, as usual, offered the greatest bone of contention among the Indian members of the Conference. The Minorities Committee with thirty-nine members and the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, in the chair could agree only upon the general principle that the minorities needed safeguards.⁴² At the end of the first session the Muslim delegation made a statement that they had participated in the work of the sub-committees in a spirit of compromise in the hope of finding a solution of the communal problem, but no settlement had ensued.⁴³ They made it clear that no constitution would be acceptable to the Muslims without adequate safeguards. The first session concluded with a statement by the Prime Minister, who accepted on behalf of the

⁴⁰ Coupland, I, p. 113.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 119.

⁴² *Ibid.*, I, p. 120. Also, Indian Round Table Conference (12 November 1930—19 January 1931), Proceedings of Committees, p. 332.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 346. The Muslims had even shown willingness to accept joint electorates, but this did not soften the Hindu attitude (Reddy, p. 42).



government the proposal of full responsible government and indicated that the government was thinking of maintaining some control over the central government with the greater devolution of powers to Indians. He hoped that the communities would be able to come to some agreement.

The next session was held in 1931.⁴⁴ The Congress was now willing to participate because a compromise had been arrived at between Lord Irwin, the governor-general, and Gandhi on 5 March 1931 which is generally called the Irwin-Gandhi Pact, whereby the Congress withdrew the civil disobedience movement and the government released all the political prisoners.⁴⁵ Gandhi was nominated the sole representative of the Congress. Among the Muslims an important addition was that of the poet Muhammad Iqbal. The second session started on 7 September 1931. Two large committees were formed to work on the details of the federal structure and the problem of safeguards for the minorities. Gandhi was a member of both of them. After negotiating with the representatives of the minorities for an entire week behind the scenes he reported failure and suggested that the communal problem might be referred to a judicial tribunal after the constitution had been framed.⁴⁶ This was interpreted by the minorities as a device to postpone the problem indefinitely and to secure power for the caste Hindus without agreed safeguards for the minorities. At this all the minorities, consisting of the Muslims, the Hindu depressed classes, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the resident European community of India, jointly reiterated their demands which were identical with the Muslim demands.⁴⁷ The session came to an end on 1 December.

In August 1932, the Prime Minister announced "the Communal Award" which embodied the safeguards for the minorities, as it had become obvious that the Hindus and the minorities could not find an agreed solution. The Muslims did not

⁴⁴ Coupland, I, p. 123.

⁴⁵ The full text of the agreement was contained in a Government of India notification No. S481/31-POLITICAL, dated 5 March 1931. It has been reproduced in Sitaramayya, I, pp. 437 ff.

⁴⁶ Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session), *Proceedings of Committees*, p. 548.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 550-555.



get all they had demanded; they were given the majority of seats in the Panjab but not in Bengal; communal electorates were maintained; weightage in minorities provinces was conceded. The third session of the Conference met on 17 November 1932; this time the attendance was smaller, the Congress and the Labour Party did not participate.⁴⁸ The pact between the Indian government and the Congress had broken down and the latter had once again embarked upon civil disobedience.⁴⁹ The main problem from the Muslim point of view was the location of the residuary powers, which they wanted to be vested in the provinces and the Hindus wanted vested in the centre. At last it was decided that each case should be determined on its merits by the viceroy as the occasion arose.⁵⁰ Once again the deadlock could be resolved only by the British. The Round Table Conference thus came to an end.

In the course of an eloquent speech Mohamed Ali had declared that he would not go back to a slave country; these words proved to be prophetic.⁵¹ He had been ailing for some time; he had actually left his sick bed to attend the conference. There, against the advice of his doctors, he did not spare himself and made the supreme offering to the cause of his people. He died before the first session of the Conference had come to an end. He had devoted his life to the service of Islam; it was, therefore, appropriate that he was buried in one of its holy places, Jerusalem, at the request of the Muslim population of that city.⁵²

The result of the Round Table Conference was the Government of India Act of 1935. It established responsible governments in the provinces, investing the governors with a few special responsibilities. One of these was the safeguarding of

⁴⁸ Coupland, I, pp. 128, 129.

⁴⁹ Sitaramayya, I, pp. 526 ff.

⁵⁰ Coupland, I, p. 129.

⁵¹ Speech in Round Table Conference, 19 November 1930: "I want to go back to my country if I can go back with the substance of freedom in my hand. Otherwise I will not go back to a slave country. I would prefer to die in a foreign country as long as it is a free country, and if you do not give us freedom in India, you will have to give me a grave here". Indian Round Table Conference (12 November 1930—19 January 1931), plenary session, 4th meeting, 19 November 1930, *Proceedings*, p. 25.

⁵² News item published in all Indian newspapers dated 23 January 1931.



the legitimate interests of the minorities. The provisions regarding the centre need not be discussed because they were never enforced. There was a difference of opinion in the Congress about the desirability of accepting office under the Act; it was, however, decided to fight the elections.⁵³ The Muslim League also was critical of the Act, but it decided to take advantage of its provisions.⁵⁴ In the Hindu provinces the Congress won sweeping victories. It was then decided that the Congress should accept office.⁵⁵ Then a new hitch occurred. The Congress demanded that the governors should not exercise the special powers which they possessed. The government resisted this demand in the beginning and even appointed ministries which did not command majorities.⁵⁶ Ultimately the Government yielded, and Lord Linlithgow, the governor-general, assured Gandhi that the governors would act only in serious matters.⁵⁷ The Muslims felt that the safeguards had been undermined.

The Muslim League, not being properly organized, did not do so well at the polls. In the United Provinces, and elsewhere, the platform on which the League had fought the elections was not radically different from the Congress election manifesto.⁵⁸ It was understood that the League and the Congress would form a coalition; but when the Congress was returned in such large numbers, it changed its policy and demanded from the League members that they should join the Congress, dissolve their Parliamentary organization,⁵⁹ and promise not to set up any one as a candidate in future on the League ticket. It was obvious that this was directed against the very existence of the Muslim League. The offer was, of course, rejected. This was only the first indication of the attitude of the Congress towards the Hindu-Muslim problem. Muslim resentment

⁵³ Coupland, II, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ *The Times*, London, 22 June 1937.

⁵⁸ *Indian Annual Register*, I (1936), pp. 299-301.

⁵⁹ The letter giving the Congress terms was published in *The Pioneer*, Allahabad, 30 July 1937. Also, Reddy, pp. 45, 46.



increased and when the Congress ministries had started functioning the Muslims felt that they were not getting a square deal. Against this the testimony of a British governor has been advanced who has testified that this feeling of the Muslims was not justified;⁶⁰ but, then, surely, if the governor were to accept the Muslim accusations as correct, he would condemn himself, because was he not charged under the Act with the special responsibility of safeguarding the legitimate interests of the minorities? The truth is that governors did not want to create a political crisis by putting a bit into the mouths of their ministers and thus had to shut their eyes to any discrimination against the minorities. Besides, the injustices were not of a legal nature; they related more to matters of everyday administration. The evidence collected in the Pirpur and Shareef Reports cannot be dismissed lightly, nor the statement of Fuzlul Huq published under the title of *Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule*.⁶¹ The Congress rule in the provinces did more to strengthen Muslim separatism than the work of the disorganized Muslim League could have achieved.

The Muslims had other fears which were perhaps of a deeper nature than administrative discrimination.⁶² They were afraid for the future of their culture. The Congress governments had adopted the Wardha scheme of education which had been drawn up to reflect Gandhi's ideas on that subject and embodied, to a large extent, his ideology. It ignored the Muslim religion and culture. In its implementation it

⁶⁰ Sir Harry Haig, former Governor of the United Provinces in *The Asiatic Review*, London, July, 1940, p. 428. Quoted by Coupland, II, p. 188.

⁶¹ *The Report of the Inquiry Committee appointed by the Council of the All-India Muslim League to inquire into Muslim Grievances in Congress Provinces*, shortly called the *Pirpur Report*, because the chairman of the Committee was Raja Syed Mohammad Mehdi of Pirpur (Delhi, 1938). The Report has been partly reproduced in Gwyer, I, pp. 410-16. *Report of the Enquiry Committee appointed by the Working Committee of the Bihar Provincial Muslim League to enquire into some grievances of Muslims in Bihar*, drafted by S. M. Shareef, hence commonly called *Shareef Report*. The preface is by S. A. Aziz, who was the chairman (Patna, 1939). A statement issued to the press by A. K. Fuzlul Huq in December 1938, later published in the form of a pamphlet, *Muslim Sufferings Under Congress Rule*, (Calcutta, 1939). Regarding the helplessness of the governors in the circumstances see Reddy, p. 119.

⁶² *Kamal Yar Jung Education Committee Report* (Calcutta, 1942). Also, Reddy, p. 46, who says: "The very name Vidya Mandir has a Hindu odour, disagreeable to Muslim nostrils."



became even more Hindu and antagonistic to Islam. In many schools Muslim children were expected to stand with folded hands and render *pūjā*—Hindu worship—before Gandhi's portrait. It was promulgated in the teeth of Muslim opposition in certain provinces. In the Central Provinces the schools were given the name of *vidyā mandirs*; this was considered significant by the Muslims because a *mandir* is a Hindu temple. In Bombay it was sought to prescribe books for Muslim children which were considered objectionable by their parents, and it was only after considerable agitation that they induced the British governor to order the withdrawal of these textbooks.⁶³ All this led a distinguished educationist, Azizul Huque, to suggest that "educational India should be a federation of two or more types of educational organizations, each developing its own culture...".⁶⁴ The report of the Kamal Yar Jung Committee appointed by the All-India Muslim Educational Conference submitted in 1942 makes interesting reading because the committee consisted of educationists without any political affiliations.

It has been mentioned that the Congress had refused to enter into agreement with the Muslim League for forming any coalition with it. With a few Muslims in its camp and possessing a vast organization for propaganda it decided to ignore the League and to establish direct contacts with the Muslim masses.⁶⁵ It claimed to be a national and not a communal organization and therefore felt justified in adopting this policy. Muslim leadership, however, characterized it as an effort for the political *shuddhi* of the Muslim masses, who were ignorant and illiterate. The Muslim League, at this, bestirred itself and soon expanded its organization even into the remote villages and won over the masses to its way of thinking, thus frustrating the attempts of the Congress. With this Mohammed Ali Jinnah emerged as the supreme leader of the Muslims, hailed by the masses as the Qā'id-i-Ā'zam.⁶⁶ Britain

⁶³ *Times of India*, Bombay, 11 July 1939, 26 December 1939.

⁶⁴ *Kamal Yar Jung Education Committee Report*, p. 279.

⁶⁵ Coupland, II, p. 180. Ambedkar (pp. 344-345) compares this to the attempt at "buying Labour with Tory gold". His comment is: "The plan was as mischievous as futile" (*ibid.*). Also, Reddy, p. 46.

⁶⁶ Coupland, pp. 180-194. Qā'id-i-Ā'zam means the greatest leader.



entered the Second World War on 3 September 1939. On 10 October the All-India Congress Committee demanded that India must be declared an independent nation "with present application" of that status "to the largest possible extent". By 15 November the Congress ministries resigned.⁶⁷ Muslim sentiments towards the Congress can be judged by the fact that they, at Jinnah's suggestion, celebrated a Day of Deliverance and Thanksgiving on 22 December.⁶⁸

For some time past the Muslim mind had been turning in another direction. The famous pan-Islamist, Saiyid Jamāl-u'd-dīn al-Afghānī, is reported to have dreamt of a Muslim republic embracing the present Central Asian socialist republics, Afghanistan and the Muslim majority areas in the North-West of the subcontinent.⁶⁹ In the circumstances of those days this did not interest any one. In March and April 1920, one Muḥammad 'Abd-u'l-Qādir Bilgrāmī published an open letter addressed to Gandhi in the *Dhū'l-Qarnain* of Badā'ūn advocating the division of the subcontinent between the Hindus and the Muslims, even giving a list of the districts, fundamentally not too different from the present boundaries of Bangladesh and Pakistan. The scheme seems to have attracted some notice, because, subsequently, it was published in the form of a pamphlet which ran into two editions, the second one being dated December 1925.⁷⁰ Even moderate Muslim opinion began to veer round the idea of some division; being disappointed with the Congress, Mohamed Ali began to lay more and more emphasis upon the autonomy of the Muslim majority provinces within a federal structure with Hindu units. The Muslims had always tried to maintain their separate identity. Savarkar, the president of the Hindu Mahāsabhā, had frequently referred to the Hindus and the Muslims as two nations. One of the founders of the same organization, Lala Lajpat Rai, had suggested the partition of India as

⁶⁷ Bolitho, p. 124.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* For Jinnah's statement on this occasion see Gwyer, I, pp. 416-20. The Congress failure to understand the Muslim point of view has been discussed by Reddy, p. 38. Reddy summarises the causes of Congress-League differences on p. 135.

⁶⁹ *History of the Freedom Movement*, I, pp. 48, 49.

⁷⁰ Bilgrāmī, Muḥammad 'Abd-u'l-Qādir.



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early as 1924.⁷¹ One Lovat Fraser, who had been editor of *The Times of India*, published in the early days of the First World War, in *The Daily Express* of London, a map in which an arrow was drawn from Constantinople to Saharanpur (now in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh) showing "a Muslim corridor", because the population of this area was overwhelmingly Muslim. Mohamed Ali, in supporting a resolution for the introduction of reforms in the North-Western Frontier Province, mentioned the existence of such a corridor.

Even the mention of such a patent fact resulted in angry criticism in Hindu political quarters. Lala Lajpat Rai said in his presidential address at the Calcutta session of the Hindu Mahāsabhā that the mentality of the Muslims of the Frontier Province, the Panjab and Sindh was such that they would make common cause with the Muslim powers beyond the North-West Frontier to establish Muslim dominion. It is interesting to find that a certain Sardar Muhammad Gul Khan of the district of Dera Ismail Khan of the North-Western Frontier Province had advocated before the Frontier Inquiry Committee in 1923 the division of India between the Hindus and the Muslims, the latter getting the area from Peshawar to Agra, if the scheme could be made practicable. In replying to the criticism levelled against him, Mohamed Ali stoutly defended the right of self-determination of "any portion of our frontier" without limiting such area. His only limit was that the principle of self-determination could not be applied to "areas situated in the heart of India, for separation is not physically possible". It may be inferred from this that if such a physical difficulty did not exist, he would be in favour of respecting the wishes of the people concerned. He made himself clear when he said that he was doubtful of the morality of the North keeping the South tied to itself in America or of Ireland trying to unite Ulster to itself against the will of the people.⁷²

⁷¹ Symonds, p. 59.

⁷² *The Comrade*, Delhi, 22 May, 1925, 5 June, 1925; article under the caption "The North West Frontier and Hindu Fears". The Committee before which the evidence was tendered had Sir Denis Bray for its chairman. Ambedkar thinks that: "It is possible that Mr. Mohammad [sic] Ali knew the whole scheme of Pakistan which came out in the evidence of the witness [Sardār Muhammad Gul Khan]... and in an unguarded moment gave out what the witness had failed to disclose, namely, the ultimate linking of Pakistan to Afghanistan" (p. 336). There is no evidence



At the Calcutta meeting of the All-Parties Convention in 1928 Aga Khan III advocated independence for each Indian province.⁷³ In the Delhi session of the Muslim All-Parties Conference, the Muslims insisted upon the fullest autonomy for the provinces. The Round Table Conference witnessed the Muslim insistence upon the residuary powers being vested in the provinces. The poet-philosopher Iqbal, while presiding over the Allahabad session of the All-India Muslim League on 29 December 1930, said in his address:

I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.⁷⁴

It has been contended by some writers that Iqbal wanted only a consolidated Muslim unit within the federation of India; this seems to be erroneous because then he would not have talked of that unit being within the British Empire or without it. He has talked of other matters in the address not because he was asking for mere autonomy, but because he was speaking from the platform of a body which had yet not accepted the policy of complete separation from India. The resolution of the Muslim All-Parties Conference he considered to be a demand for a free Islam within a free India. This is autonomy; therefore, he prefaced his remarks about a Muslim state by saying that personally he would like to go even further, which could mean only independence. In the third Round Table Conference Iqbal reiterated the opinion expressed by the Aga Khan that there should be no central government in the subcontinent and that the provinces should be autonomous and independent dominions.⁷⁵ Iqbal's opinion, however, like Aga Khan III's remarks regarding the independence of the

to support this surmise. However, Mohamed Ali did not look upon the Muslims as a mere minority. He said in the Indian Round Table Conference 1930-31 (Minorities Committee, Documents, Minutes, Meetings 1-6): "... the Musalmans constitute not a minority in the sense in which the late War and its sequel has habituated us to consider European minorities. ... A community that in India alone must be numbering more than 70 millions cannot easily be called a minority."

⁷³ Sitaramayya, I, p. 334.

⁷⁴ Shamloo, p. 12.

⁷⁵ Ambedkar, p. 336 f.n.



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provinces, did not attract much notice.

There was, however, a dreamer to whom the idea of a separate Muslim state was of great importance. He was Chaudhari Rahmat Ali, who was a student at Cambridge in England and who was greatly perturbed by the willingness of the Indian Muslim delegation to the Round Table Conference to accept an All-India federation. He tried to canvass the members of the delegation, who dismissed his ideas as the fantasy of the mind of a student. He, however, persisted and issued an appeal in 1933 under his own signature and the signature of three of his co-workers. This was entitled *Now or Never*.⁷⁶ He went on working and ultimately came to exert great influence upon the Muslim students from the subcontinent studying in the United Kingdom. It was he who invented the name for the proposed state by taking the first letter of every federating unit except Baluchistan, of which he took the ending. The Hindus were furious, the British distinctly unsympathetic, and, to start with, the Muslim leadership was cold.⁷⁷ The movement, however, began to gather strength and attract some notice.⁷⁸ The United Kingdom was at that time the centre of higher studies for Indian students, and in converting the Muslim students in England, Rahmat Ali was converting the cream of the future intelligentsia and its most influential section, because only the most brilliant or the wealthiest students could get the privilege of studying in England in those days.

Events, however, were moving in the same direction in the subcontinent itself. The Muslims realized the futility of constitutional or legal safeguards in case the majority turned its back upon them. On 28 August 1938 the Working Committee of

⁷⁶ *Now or Never, Are We to Live or Perish for Ever?* (Cambridge, 1933).

⁷⁷ See article on Pakistan by F. Krenkow in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Supplement No. 4* (Leiden, 1937), p. 174. The delegates of the Muslim League and All-India Muslim Conference called it chimerical, impracticable, only a student's scheme, *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, Minutes of Evidence*, Questions 9598, 9599.

⁷⁸ The fact that it was the subject of questions in the Joint Committee (see *supra*) shows that its significance was not lost upon those dealing with Indian constitutional problems. The article by Krenkow, mentioned in fn. 77, shows how it was received in Hindu and British circles. A German daily printed a front page story before the War and the movement found mention in Amir Shakib Arsalan's review, *Les Nations Arabes* published in French. The Turkish authoress, Halide Edib, attached considerable importance to it in *Inside India*, pp. 347-368.



the League expressed its disillusionment in a resolution.⁷⁹ Previously Jinnah had declared that majority rule could not work in a land of "different nationalities".⁸⁰ In October 1938 the Provincial Conference at Karachi asked the All-India Muslim League to "devise a scheme of constitution under which the Muslims may attain full independence".⁸¹ There followed a number of pamphlets by various authors who did not advocate complete severance of constitutional ties with India but who, nevertheless, wanted a loose federation or simply a confederacy.⁸² These gained favour neither with the Muslims nor with the Hindus. In September 1939 the Working Committee of the Muslim League recorded its opposition to any "federal objective" because the subcontinent was inhabited by "various nationalities".⁸³ At last on 23 March 1940 the Lahore session of the League passed the famous resolution demanding Partition.⁸⁴ Henceforth Pakistan became an article of faith with the Muslim masses. The more strongly the idea was condemned by the Hindus, the more convinced the Muslims grew of its necessity.

The Muslims, however, had still to go quite far before they could realize the goal that they had set themselves. The Hindus reacted emotionally and called it the vivisection of the motherland, comparing it to the killing of a sacred cow.⁸⁵ The British had come to look upon the political unification of the subcontinent as their handiwork, therefore, they were loath to divide it. Besides, the Congress had maintained strong publicity machinery for themselves in the United Kingdom

⁷⁹ *Indian Annual Register*, II (1939), p. 348.

⁸⁰ *Times of India*, 7 August 1939. For Muslim reluctance to accept centralization, Reddy, pp. 28, 29.

⁸¹ *Times of India*, 12 October 1938.

⁸² The schemes were drawn up by Khan, Sikandar Hayat; Abdul Latif, Syed; and the Aligarh professors, Prof. Syed Zafrul Hasan and Dr. Mohammad Afzal Husain Qadri.

⁸³ *Indian Annual Register*, II (1939), p. 351.

⁸⁴ The date is taken from Bolitho, p. 127. The full text of the Resolution has been given by Rajput, pp. 79, 80. Rajput gives the date as 26 March, which is incorrect. The Resolution stated *inter alia* that "... the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states ..."

⁸⁵ E.g. Gandhi in *Harijan*, 6 April 1940.



and other countries. It had created a reservoir of good will for the Congress and there was a better understanding of its point of view.⁸⁶ Besides, the British had hoped that a united India would be a guarantee of stability in the entire region. The Congress had built up traditions of friendship with the British Labour Party in particular. Could the Muslim cause prosper when two of the three parties concerned were hostile or unsympathetic? A period of hectic political activity began in 1940, and, though their demand of partition ultimately found fulfilment, the Muslims received a poor deal in territories and other assets. It is necessary to describe in a few words the various stages of the negotiations.

In July 1940 the Congress leaders expressed their readiness to support the war endeavour if the independence of India were declared at once and if there were established at the centre a national government, which would be responsible to the legislature. The Government replied by their August offer in which they insisted that there should be some agreement between the communities before transfer could be made and that the responsibility for framing the future constitution would lie in the hands of the Indians themselves and not on the British Parliament.⁸⁷ In July 1941 the Governor-General's Executive Council was enlarged to include more Indians. This failed to satisfy the Congress. The Muslim League, on the basis of its principle of two nations, demanded half the Indian seats; as this was not conceded, the League stood aloof from the expanded council.⁸⁸ The early part of 1942 saw a Japanese advance towards the Indian border. At this the British Government sent Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the British War cabinet, to India with new proposals.⁸⁹ These included the promise of setting up, after the cessation of hostilities, a constitution-making body in India whose recommendations would be accepted and implemented by the British Parliament.

⁸⁶ A British committee for the Congress was created simultaneously with the establishment of the Congress (Sitaramayya, I, p. 17). Very early funds were earmarked for publicity in England and later on in the United States of America and other countries.

⁸⁷ *Indian Annual Register*, II (1940), p. 175. The full text of the "August Offer" is given by Coupland, II, Appendix VII, pp. 333-335.

⁸⁸ *Indian Annual Register*, II (1940), pp. 243-245.

⁸⁹ For details *The Cripps Mission* (Oxford, 1942).



This would entail the complete transfer of authority to India. The proposals also included the provision that any province or provinces which were not prepared to accept the constitution thus drafted should be entitled to form a separate union and the princely states could do the same. The proposals were rejected by the Congress mainly because they conceded the possibility of Partition.⁹⁰ Gandhi called it a postdated cheque on a crashing bank.⁹¹ The League which was favourably inclined towards the proposals rejected them on their rejection by Congress, because they did not make the establishment of Pakistan a certainty.⁹² The Congress wanted to exploit the situation created by the Japanese advance and so fomented the disorders of 1942, the result of Gandhi's exhortation to the people "to do or die". It was a violent outbreak and, for some time, the writ of the British ceased to run in Bihar and the Eastern part of the United Provinces through which passed the communications to the Eastern front against the Japanese. In the rest of the subcontinent as well there were serious disorders.⁹³ The Muslims stood aside, Jinnah having declared that the movement was directed as much against the Muslim demand as against the war effort of the British.⁹⁴ For a while it seemed doubtful that the British would succeed in crushing the movement. However, with a supreme effort they did succeed and order was restored.

The only congressman who saw the necessity of arriving at some compromise was Rajagopalachari who proposed a resolution in the All-India Congress Committee in May 1942 conceding the principle of Pakistan, but he was not able to carry it.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ "The novel principle of non-accession was a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity" (Coupland, II, p. 279; also Congress Working Committee Resolution of 2 April, 1942).

⁹¹ Casey, p. 52.

⁹² Bolitho, p. 140.

⁹³ For a succinct account of "the rebellion" see Coupland, II, pp. 301 ff.

⁹⁴ Resolution of the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim League passed on 20 August 1942 (*Times of India*, 21 August, 1942). The resolution also expressed the opinion that the negotiations between the Congress and Cripps had broken down "because of the refusal of the the British Government to hand over the Muslims and the minorities to the tender mercies of the Congress".

⁹⁵ Symonds, p. 65.



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So unpopular was this move that he had to resign from the Congress. When Gandhi was released in 1944, he was persuaded by Rajagopalachari to have discussions with Jinnah, but the talks proved abortive. Throughout, their arguments ran on parallel tracks without ever being able to establish any contact. In the spring of 1945 when Germany had been defeated, Lord Wavell, the viceroy, convened a conference at Simla in which he renewed the proposal regarding the expansion of the Executive Council; the conference proved unsuccessful because the Congress demanded the right to nominate a Congress Muslim and the viceroy wanted to give a seat to the unpopular Unionist Party of the Panjab out of the Muslim quota.⁹⁶ Soon after, the war against Japan came to an end and at the same time Labour won the elections in the United Kingdom. New elections were ordered to test the claims of the various political parties in India; these elections completely vindicated Jinnah's claim that the Muslims were solidly behind the Muslim League, which captured all the Muslim seats in the Central Assembly and 446 out of 495 Muslim seats in the provincial assemblies.⁹⁷ The main losses of the League were in the North-Western Frontier Province where 'Abd-u'l-Ghaffār Khān had considerable influence.

In March 1946 the British cabinet sent a mission of three members to evolve some method of framing a constitution for India. Their prolonged discussions with the different leaders produced no agreement, hence they produced a plan which is known as the Cabinet Mission Plan.⁹⁸ It suggested the election of a constituent assembly to frame a constitution for a Union of India. Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications would form the federal subjects. After a preliminary session the provincial delegates would meet in three sections. The first consisted of the region where the Hindus formed a majority; the second consisted of the Panjab, the North-Western Frontier Province, and Sind; the third of Bengal and

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ The text of the Cabinet Mission's statement embodying their plan has been reproduced by Rajput, Appendix I. Rajput's date is wrong; it should be 16, not 15 May. The plan and the correspondence between the Congress and the Mission has been reproduced in Sitaramayya, II, pp. clxiii ff.



Assam. In these sections the provincial delegates would decide whether they wanted to form a group for the common administration of certain provincial subjects. This plan was announced on 16 May 1946; a month after, on 16 June, 1946, the viceroy, in consultation with the Cabinet Mission, issued a statement regarding the expansion of his cabinet, in which, *inter alia*, he said:

In the event of the two major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join in the setting up of a Coalition Government on the above lines, it is the intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the statement of May 16.⁹⁹

The League obtained an assurance from the viceroy that the government "shall go ahead with the plan, so far as circumstances permit, if either party accepts";¹⁰⁰ on 6 June it accepted the entire plan. On 26 June the Congress accepted the constitutional part of the plan but refused to join the interim government. At this the viceroy appointed a caretaker government consisting of officials and did not invite the League to form the government.

This was a clear breach of a solemn undertaking. It is true that the purpose of an interim government would not have been served if the congress had been left out; but then such an undertaking should not have been given. It seems obvious from these transactions that the Cabinet Mission had expected the League to reject the plan because it did not concede full independence to the Muslim majority areas and, therefore, the condition of proceeding with the formation of the interim government with the support of a single party had been incorporated with a view to leaving out the League if it proved obdurate; but Jinnah frustrated this attempt by his acceptance. There was great resentment among the Muslims; specially when, immediately after their acceptance of the constitutional part of the plan as well, Congress leaders had started putting their own interpretation upon the proposals which ran counter to the explanations given by the Cabinet Mission.¹⁰¹ The League

⁹⁹ Rajput, p. 248.

¹⁰⁰ Viceroy's letter to Jinnah, 4 June 1946, reproduced in A. C. Bannerman, *The Making of the Indian Constitution*, I, p. 174.

¹⁰¹ Symonds, pp. 68, 69.



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now withdrew its acceptance of the proposals, called upon all Muslims to renounce their titles and decided to launch a campaign of Direct Action for the achievement of independent Pakistan.¹⁰² The Congress then entered the government and all the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council were the nominees of the Congress.¹⁰³ The League soon felt that a government entirely in the hands of its opponents was detrimental to Muslim interests and, therefore, it also joined the government.¹⁰⁴

In the meanwhile elections to the Constituent Assembly had taken place and it began its work. The Muslim League members, however, did not attend.¹⁰⁵ It was now realized both in Great Britain and in the Congress circles that a constitution framed by a body from which the Muslims were absent could not be imposed upon them.¹⁰⁶ The result of this was that a new plan was announced on 3 June 1947 which brought Pakistan into existence.¹⁰⁷

It may be added here that there were among the Muslims a few leaders and some splinter groups that were not in favour of Partition. Of these perhaps the Jam'iyat-u'l-'ulamā was the most interesting, because one expected from their traditions that they would support the idea of the establishment of an independent Muslim state with enthusiasm. However, the conservatism which has become so deeply ingrained in the system of theological studies in the subcontinent led them to think that the only right course would be the one which had been laid for them by Shaikh-u'l-Hind Maḥmūd-u'l-Ḥasan, when he had participated in the Khilafat Movement and insisted upon unity with the Hindus. The handful of leaders who were still with the Congress were also mostly those who

¹⁰² Symonds, p. 127.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Rajput, Appendix VI gives the text of the Plan. Appendix VII reproduces the Indian Independence Act of 18 July 1947.



had developed a tradition of cooperating with the Congress before the movement of Pakistan came to the forefront. The rank and file among the Muslim community, as the election results in 1945 showed, enthusiastically supported the demand for Pakistan; the most enthusiastic supporters of the demand came from the provinces in which the Muslims formed a minority.

Observers of the growth of the Pakistan movement were surprised at the rapidity with which the idea spread among the Muslims. The emotional attachment to the ideal of Pakistan also grew in intensity as soon as it seemed that it was feasible to establish an independent Muslim state in the subcontinent. Any one who has studied the desire of the Muslims of the subcontinent to maintain their separate identity throughout its history would understand the appeal of Pakistan to the community. Besides, since it lost political authority, the desire for a Muslim state has been deep-rooted in the consciousness of the community. On the negative side was the absence of cementing factors in the relations of the two communities.¹⁰⁸ They have lived with minimum contacts; there has been little inter-marriage, because Islam forbids it with the Hindus and the Hindus are bound by their rules of caste; except in a small sector of the highly Westernized class, inter-dining has been unthinkable; the festivals provide no social occasion for coming together, instead they have often given a pretext for rioting; the communities have remained different not only in religion, but in everything, culture, thought, outlook on life, even in the fashions of dress, cookery, furniture and domestic utensils. More than anything else, there has been no sense of a common history; instead there are two views of such historical happenings as are capable of creating any emotion; the heroes of the Muslim conquest and the rebels against Muslim domination inspire contradictory feelings among the Muslims and the Hindus; common bondage to a foreign government also, as would appear from this narrative, did not always inspire the same feelings at all times; even if it had, more positive influences are needed in building up nations. The attitude of the Muslim

¹⁰⁸ Ambedkar, p. 346.



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community towards the idea of Pakistan was, therefore, the logical consequence of its history.¹⁰⁹

Subsequent developments belong more properly to the history of Pakistan. On 14 August 1947, when Pakistan came into existence, the place of the Muslim community of the subcontinent was taken by the Pakistani nation and the Muslim minority still living in the Indian Union. It is not the function of history to speculate about the pattern that will arise from this division.

¹⁰⁹ Compare Ambedkar (pp. 340, 341) who says: "That Muslim politics should have run a parallel course and should never have merged in the Hindu current of politics is a strange fact of modern Indian History. In so segregating themselves the Muslims were influenced by some mysterious feeling, the source of which they could not define and guided by a hidden hand which they could not see but which was all the same directing them to keep apart from Hindus. This mysterious feeling and this hidden hand was no other than their pre-appointed destiny, symbolized by Pakistan, which, unknown to them, was working within them"



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Select Chronology

- 571 Birth of the Prophet.
- 610 The beginning of the Prophet's mission.
- 622 Hijrah; the commencement of the Hijrah era.
- 711 Arab invasion of Sind.
- 998-1030 Maḥmūd of Ghazni.
- 1175 Muḥammad bin Sām's invasion.
- 1192-93 Capture of Delhi.
- c.1200 Conquest of Bengal.
- 1210-1236 Iltutmish.
- 1266-1287 Balban.
- 1294 Conquest of Devagiri (future Daulatabad in the Deccan).
- 1296-1316 'Alā-u'd-din Khalji.
- 1297 Conquest of Gujrat.
- 1305 Conquest of Malwa.
- 1310 Malik Kāfūr's conquest of the extreme south.
- 1325-1351 Muḥammad bin Tughluq.
- 1333-1345 Ibn Baṭṭūṭah in the subcontinent.
- 1339 Shāh Mīr becomes king of Kaśhmīr.
- 1351-1388 Fīrūz Shāh.
- 1391 Zafar Khān appointed governor of Gujrat.
- 1396 Independence of Gujrat.
- 1404 Usurpation of the throne of Bengal by Ganesh.
- 1451-1526 The Lodis.
- 1498-1517 Sikandar Lodi.
- 1526-1538 First Mughul Empire.
- 1538-1545 Sher Shāh.

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SELECT CHRONOLOGY

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- 1545–1552 Islām Shāh Sūr.
1555 Mughul Restoration.
1556–1605 Akbar.
1605–1627 Jahāngir.
1628–1658 Shāh Jahān.
1658–1707 ‘Ālamgir I.
1703–1762 Shāh Walī-u’llah.
1761 Defeat of Marathas at Panipat.
1765 Grant of *diwānī* of Bengal to the British.
1786–1831 Saiyid Aḥmad Shahīd.
1817–1898 Syed Ahmed Khan.
1857–1858 The sepoy Mutiny and the Rebellion.
1858 End of the rule of the East India Company.
1873–1938 Muhammad Iqbal.
1867–1948 Qā’id-i-A’zam Mohammed Ali Jinnah.
1878–1930 Mohamed Ali.
1885 First meeting of the Indian National Congress
1905 Partition of Bengal.
1906 Foundation of the Muslim League.
1911 Partial revocation of the Partition of Bengal.
1914–18 First World War.
1916 Lucknow Pact.
1919 Montagu Chelmsford Reforms.
1920 Khilafat Movement.
1927 Simon Commission.
1928 Nehru Report.
1930–32 Round Table Conferences.
1930 Iqbal’s address advocating a separate Muslim state.
1935 Government of India Act.
1937 Congress Ministries in Hindu majority provinces.
1939 Outbreak of the Second World War. Day of Deliverance and Thanks-giving observed by Muslims.
1940 Pakistan Resolution.
1942 Cripps Proposals.
1946 Cabinet Mission.
1947 Establishment of Pakistan.



Glossary

adyars—a group of Shaivite religious leaders and thinkers.

ahl-i-ḥadīth—originally the jurists who laid **greater emphasis upon ḥadīth** (the traditions of the Prophet) than upon their own interpretation; in later days, in the subcontinent, the school which does not bind itself to any of the recognized schools of jurisprudence and believes in independent interpretation; the school is commonly called *ghair-muqallid*, “those who do not follow others”.

ālvārs—a group of Vaishnavite religious leaders and thinkers.

baniyās—banians, Hindu traders.

dhimmī—a non-Muslim living in the protection of Islam, a non-Muslim resident of a Muslim state whose authority he recognizes.

diwānī—the revenue administration.

ghair-muqallid—see *ahl-i-ḥadīth*.

ghazal—a lyrical ode, following a set pattern of rhyme, aa, ba, ca, da, ea, fa, etc. Usually a *ghazal* is a love poem, but occasionally it has been utilized for other purposes as well.

ḥadīth—a tradition of the Prophet, a report about some saying or action of his, which, if recognized to be authentic, is considered to be a fundamental source of law. Its authority, however, is subordinate to an injunction contained in the Qur’ān.

ḥajj—the annual pilgrimage to Mecca on the 9th day of *Dhu’l-Hijjah*, the month of the *ḥajj*. It is compulsory at least once in a life time for those who can afford it.

hijrah—*hijra* and *hegira*. The flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina, which is the beginning of the Hijrah era of the Muslims.

hinayāna—the lesser vehicle, the orthodox form of Buddhism.

hindwī—the language of Hind, applied more particularly to the north Indian dialect written in adapted Arabic script, the fore-runner of Urdu.



GLOSSARY

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ijtihād—the endeavour of human reason and knowledge to understand the application of a religious injunction to a particular situation; interpretation.

iṣṭihār—a public announcement.

ismā'ilīs—the followers of Ismā'il, believers in his apostolic succession according to the Shi'ah theory of the imamate. They are also called the sect of the seven, because they believe in Ismā'il being the seventh imam and his being followed by cycles of seven imams in eternal succession.

iṭhnā'aṣṣharīs—believers in twelve imams. They reject the imamate of Ismā'il. They form the larger wing of the Shi'ahs.

jihād—literally "the utmost endeavour", mainly used for taking up arms in a righteous cause, which is sometimes called *jihād bi's-saif*, "the utmost endeavour with the sword".

jizyah—a poll tax levied upon able-bodied *dhimmīs* who can afford to pay the tax after the satisfaction of their needs. Priests, hermits, servants of the state, cripples, women and children are exempt.

Ka'bah—the sacred shrine at Mecca.

Karīm—benign, one of the names of God.

khānqāh—a hospice where the sufi *shaiḥ* and his disciples live.

khārījī—a Muslim sect which does not believe in the canonical necessity of the *khilāfat*.

Khudā—God.

kufw—adequate (compatibility for marriage); see also Chapter III fn. 64.

mahāyāna—the greater vehicle, that form of Buddhism which adopted beliefs and practices originally foreign to it.

mahdī—a leader who will restore the pristine purity of Islam and spread it in the entire world.

maliccha, also *malishṭa*—an unclean outsider, used for non-Hindus.

manṣabdār—a member of the senior service under the Mughuls.

murāqabah—a withdrawal of the mind from the physical environment and all thoughts about it and deep concentration upon the contemplation of God.

masnad—literally "support"; a seat with a cushioned support, used for a gubernatorial throne.

mobed—a Zoroastrian priest.

Muḥarram—the first month of the Muslim calendar. It was on the 10th of this month that the Prophet's grandson Ḥusain was martyred at Karbalā in Iraq. The first ten days are celebrated in the Subcontinent to commemorate the event.

muḥtasib—an officer under Muslim governments who prevented the commission of any public nuisance or flagrant and wilful breach of the moral code and law.



- mujāhid*—one engaged in *jihād*; for *jihād* see *supra*.
mujāhidīn—plural of *mujāhid*.
mujtahid—one who is competent to undertake *ijtihād*, one who actually undertakes *ijtihād*.
muwaḥḥid—a monotheist. The Druz use it for one who has reached the highest stage in spiritual progress and attained freedom from exoteric as well as esoteric bonds of religion. (Zāhid 'Alī, p. 454.)
qāḍī—a judge.
qur'ān—the Koran.
Raḥīm—merciful, one of the names of God.
rānī—the consort of a *rāja*, a ranee.
risāldār—a junior commissioned officer of the sepoy cavalry under the British.
ṣadr amīn—a subordinate native judge under the British in the Subcontinent during the nineteenth century.
ṣadr-u'-ṣ-ṣudūr—the highest religious dignitary of the Muslims under Muslim governments in the Subcontinent. He was the head of the department of religious affairs.
saiyid—a descendent of the Prophet.
shaiḥ—literally “old man”, applied to the experienced sufi who trained others in mysticism and looked after their spiritual welfare.
shaiḥs—a class of the Muslims in the Subcontinent based mostly on race. The word is used in different senses in various areas.
shar'—Islamic law.
shī'ah—a Muslim sect which believes that the *khilāfat* should have been hereditary and limited to the House of 'Alī.
shuhūd—an ecstatic experience in which the sufi feels that he is witnessing Reality.
silsilah—literally “chain”, “continuation”, used for a brotherhood of Sufis following the same techniques of spiritual development.
subedar—a junior commissioned officer of the sepoy infantry under the British. Its origin is *ṣūbahdār*, the governor of a province under the Mughuls. Subedar was sometimes spelled *subahdar*.
sunnah—the traditions of belief and action established by the Prophet considered to embody the interpretation of the revelation contained in the Qur'ān.
taḍḍikirah—literally “narration”, often used for accounts of Sufis.
'ulamā—ulema. 'Ulamā is the plural of 'ālim, one who knows, a learned man, applied more commonly to a doctor of Muslim law and theology.
urdū-i-mu'allā—literally “the Exalted Camp”, used in later days for the Mughul court.



GLOSSARY

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vāmamārgī—a follower of the left-hand path, applied to those followers of Tantric Hinduism who indulge in sexual orgies as the highest form of worship.

vidyā mandir—a temple of learning, applied to schools established under Gandhi's Wardha Scheme of Education (*vidyā*—learning, *mandir* is a Hindu temple).

zakāt—the Muslim poor rate, being 2½% of all wealth owned continuously for a year.

zamīndār, also *zemindar*—a landlord.

zamīndārī—the rights of a *zamīndār* in his land.



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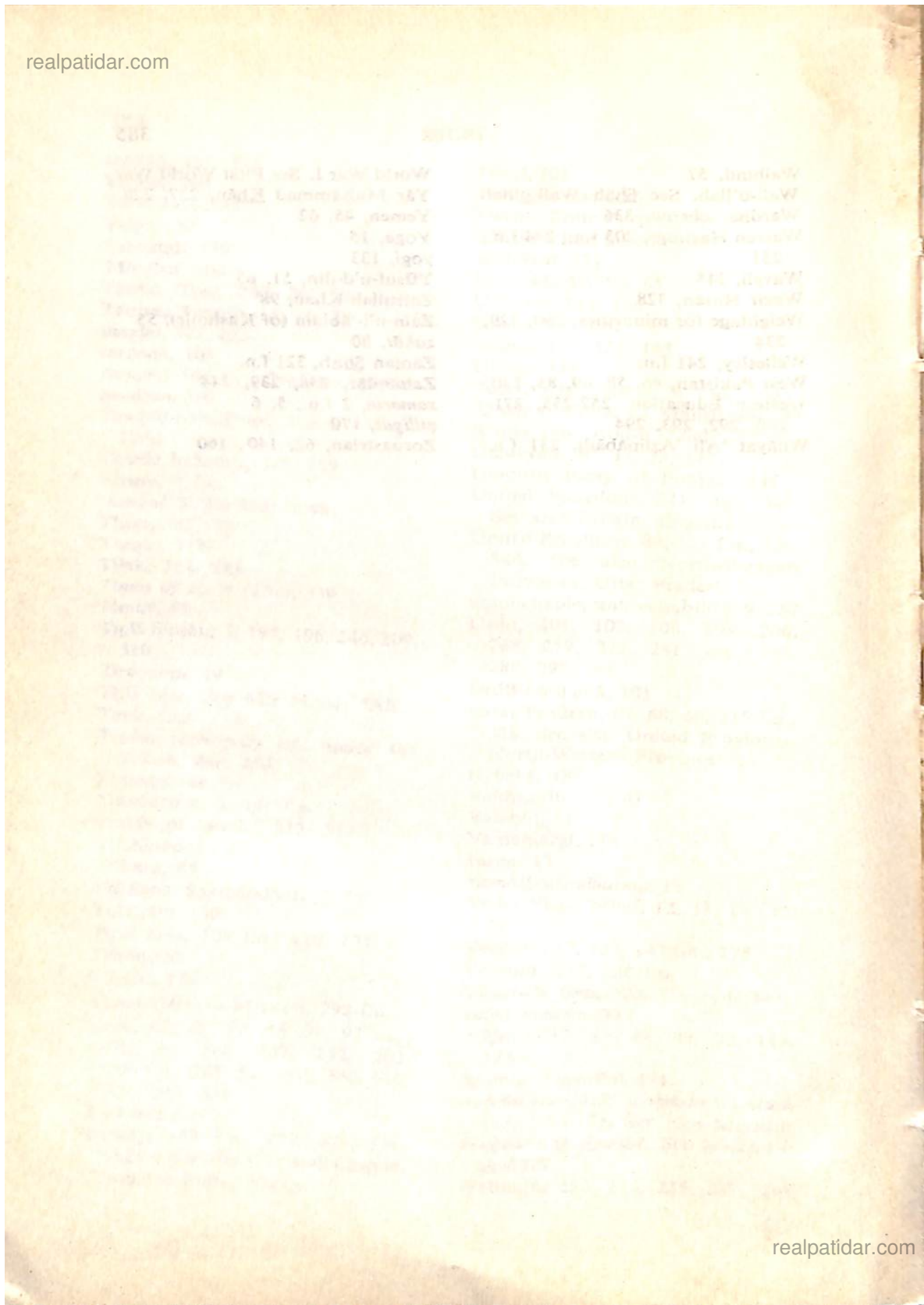
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